DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 397 CG 024 306

AUTHOR	Kuepper, Joan Eklund
TITLE	Homework Helpers: A Guide for Parents Offering Assistance.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-932796-22-2
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	154p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Educational Media Corporation, P.O. Box 21311, Minneapolis, MN 55421 ($11.95).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Homework; Listening Skills; Parent Child Relationship; Parents; *Secondary School Students; *Study Skills; Test Wiseness; Time Management

ABSTRACT

This guide provides methods for parents to assist their children in homework. The first of the guide's 10 chapters discusses motivation. Looking at sources of motivation, reviewing study skill shaping strategies, learning about rewards, and accomplishment are addressed. The second chapter discusses communication. Considering message forms, choosing message senders, and sending the messages are emphasized. The third chapter, on commitment, describes formal and informal contracts or agreements that adults and children can sign as well as a variety of charts to record student progress or to tally scores on meeting agreed-upon goals. The fourth chapter presents information about study skills. Listening skills, reading strategies, notetaking, and using reference sources are discussed. The fifth chapter explores test taking competence and confidence. Preparing before the test, memory strategies, comprehension during the test, learning by review after the test, and test anxiety are discussed. The sixth chapter addresses homework quality. Proofreading, following directions, dealing with incorrect or inadequate work, and pace overload are discussed. The seventh chapter, on everyday assignments discusses visualizing goals and progress, specifying behavior by goal, time, or task, and looking at long-range planning. Topics of the eighth chapter, which address incomplete work, include scheduling priorities and principles, dealing with distractions and interruptions, asking for help, double checking for needed materials and checking for completion. The ninth chapter focuses on recording assignments and deadlines, dealing with delays, storing homework to be finished or graded, handing in work properly, and loaning and sharing work. The final chapter addresses writing or calling the school staff and giving and receiving accurate information. Supplementing the text are 79 figures showing sample study contracts and progress charts, task checkoff forms, time logs, study plans, homework recording forms, and other useful tools. (LLL)

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A Guide for Parents Offering Assistance

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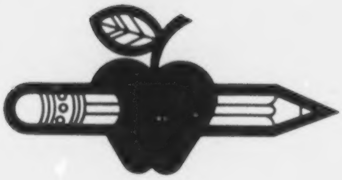
Homework Helpers:

A Guide for Parents
Offering Assistance

by

Joan Eklund Kuepper



Dedication

To my parents

Ralph A. Eklund (1905-1985)
and
Evelyn E. Eklund

for their unending support of my education.

With gratitude to

William, Elizabeth and Kathryn Kuepper

for their patience, interest, and support.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 86-083097
ISBN 0-932796-22-2
Printing - (last digit)
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Published by—
Educational Media Corporation®
PO Box 21311
Minneapolis, MN 55421

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Production editor—

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Graphic design—

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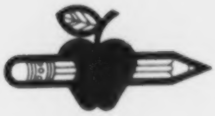

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Introduction

Welcome!

I believe I had the pleasure of meeting you or someone very much like you before. Was it...

> ...in the ***middle school counselor's office*** when we talked about sending your first child through the school system? You were not sure of what to expect. Or, were you the parent who felt "all used up" after sending seven others through school? You needed some different ideas to help your youngest. Perhaps you were the frightened parent whose son was failing in nearly every subject area and he did not seem to care. Or, were you the embarrassed mother whose son just lost his perfect grade point by receiving "of all things" a D in science? You knew he could easily do so much better.
>
> ...in the ***library*** where, as the president of the Academic Booster Club, you sought ideas to increase or reinforce study skills for *all* levels of students from the honors program through the remedial and specialized needs programs. Or, were you the parent of a high school senior who admitted how little he studied in high school? He realized that to maintain a high grade point in college, he would need a more orderly and intensive approach to studying.
>
> ...in the ***high school principal's office*** when your daughter's ineligibility for softball due to poor grades was discussed? Or, were you present to request that your son's court-ordered school progress reports be sent to the probation officer each month? Perhaps you were the concerned grandparent who admitted that the grandson you were raising now hated school as much as you hated it when you were a child.
>
> ...in the ***parents' group meeting*** when the discussion focused on the pressure for perfect grades for students in the honors program? You mentioned that threatening your student did not work very well for long.
>
> ...at the ***private parent/teacher conference*** where your son's retention in the third grade was discussed due to his "immaturity?"
>
> ...during the ***telephone call*** when you admitted that you and your husband were always fighting over how to handle your fifth grader's poor report cards? You told me that many mornings she is often "too sick" to go to school.
>
> ...at the ***grocery store*** late at night when we were both shopping? We stopped to discuss how our time at home is so limited because of our long working hours and other pressures.

> ...at "our" ***educators' in-service*** when you laughingly stated that it is sometimes humiliating to be a teacher? You told me that you have all the same homework problems with your son that you discuss daily with other parents—and the others are doing better using your ideas than you are.
>
> ...at the ***alumni meeting*** where we were discussing the concerns college freshmen have about "serious studying?" These "jitters" were taking a high toll on the nerves of parents and young adults alike. All this was compounded because you were *also* back in school at night updating your credentials and you were having your *own* study dilemmas.
>
> I remember now! You were the babysitter who was trying to do a bit of "tutoring," but you were not having a lot of success.

Whether it was in a small or a large group, I do recall one impression I received—you cared! You cared enough to feel frustrated, scared, even angry occasionally, and you wanted a better plan—nothing too complicated, nothing too expensive, nothing too time consuming, I believe you said. It was obvious you intended to become more involved with your children's education and you knew well the realistic limits we all must recognize.

As a parent of teenagers, a former teacher, a youth leader, and a school psychologist of ten years, I hear you and I would like to suggest some possibilities to help you to help your children learn.

It may be of little consolation, but please realize you are not alone. There is widespread interest from many parents who are asking how can they more effectively help their children to fulfill their study responsibilities. Parents often confess that they are confused about how to do this. They have tried ideas that did not turn out to be as beneficial as they had hoped. Occasionally, these parents doubt whether they want to become involved again. If they try to help again, they want to be sure there will be better results. In other cases, parents, in utter frustration, simply give up. They decide that it is better to do the homework themselves and to simply have their children recopy it. Ultimately they know this is not a good solution because it is dishonest and they realize students must do their own work to learn.

Parents' expectations sometimes are too high. Some parents believe that if the student's homework is not done perfectly, it is not worth handing in. In fact, some teachers convey that same message to parents! This leads to an "I give up" attitude concerning the whole process. The message of this book is to affirm that all improvement is worthwhile and we must keep trying!

You know your student far better than any teacher, counselor, or psychologist ever will. The school staff will be eager to help, but your concern and assistance can be the primary factor in enabling your child to improve school performance. The purpose of these pages is to present some ideas that you can use to help your student with homework assignments. The fact that you are reading this book is a positive indicator of a successful partnership between you and your child as you work together to improve study skills.

It can be exciting to work on a problem. Starting—taking that first step—is probably the most important action you will make. If your attitude is positive, it will not matter if some techniques do not work. You will simply keep what works and eliminate what does not work. Students will be more successful and they will feel better about themselves. As a parent, you will feel better about yourself as you see progress being made.

Your children's schoolwork is, of course, primarily *their* job and *their* responsibility. By using the strategies I will suggest, increasingly your children will take it upon themselves to "own" this work. The main goal is to help children see that it is their work to do and that they can derive self-esteem from doing it. Gradually you should be able to fade out of the picture as your students learn to handle *most* of the work *most* of the time. Both you and your students must understand this is about as *good* as it gets for *most* of us. When we were students, we never turned in every paper and our marks were not always perfect. We are not trying to attain perfection; we are striving for *improvement* for the children about whom we are concerned.

If you are reading this book because of a problem that is severe (for example, your child just received four D or F notices), then an enormous improvement might be to have only two D's and no F's on a report card next semester. In fact, such a child may be the one who worked the hardest! If your daughter has never had a C in her life and she just got a C+ (and you are saying, "Can she still go to Harvard?"), then you are reading this book with a different level of expectation. That is important to keep in mind when choosing the ideas to try and when evaluating progress. Even *within* families, some of us have children who are inherently well organized and some children who are not well organized—the same parents and the same messages, we think, but very differently functioning children. We must individualize the help we provide to each of our children.

Please keep in mind—before you proceed to even another page—that you *love* your children and sometimes you may forget to say that to them. You need to love your children and to see them as being able to do something worthwhile. If you do not go to your children with the attitude that, "You can do this and I am here to help you; let us get started," it can very quickly deteriorate into, "I will nag you. I will chart your progress (or lack of it) even more than I did earlier. I will get even more angry if we fail again." That is definitely not the attitude to have. If I did not stress this in the opening pages, you could take some of the materials in this book and turn them into real tools of drudgery. I cringe at that thought. As often as possible, an emphasis is placed on *rewarding good behavior* and *using positive approaches.*

Homework Helpers dwells on planning because, if there is a problem, it pays to make a plan. Then you can act instead of react. Analyze your situation, do not rush out and do the first thing that occurs to you. You may hear that a neighbor or friend is doing something, so you decide you must do the same thing with your child. Most often the problems are not similar and often the results will not turn out as expected.

In Chapters 1-3, *Motivation, Communication,* and *Commitment,* you are urged to consider: What are your students' personalities? What would appeal to your children? What would be positive for them and for you? Because you are a part of the plan too, your plan must be acceptable to you and to them. It makes no sense for you to make plans with your children that you do not have the energy, the time, the attention span, or the resources to complete. You will be far ahead if you develop a unique plan that fits your individual working hours, the resources you have available to give, and the attention you can spare.

The message is not, "There is an answer, now you have it, go do it." The message is, "There are lots of answers." You know your children. You will see lots of choices. Decide *with your children* what techniques would be the best ones to use first.

Use of This Book

Homework Helpers includes many possible "answers" for you to use in helping students from first grade through college to be more successful. If, at this point, you know their specific needs, then you may wish to scan the *Table of Contents* to locate those areas. Because parents and students do not always identify problems correctly, valuable effort and time can be lost "fixing" the "wrong" habits! Accurate information from teachers and counselors may greatly help in defining the problems that need work. Teachers, counselors, administrators, or psychologists also may use this book to make recommendations to parents who desire to help their children to study more effectively.

While you may wish to scan the entire book and ask many questions before deciding how best to proceed, please start now!

Sample materials are included, complete with grade-level codes. The blank forms which follow the examples are for you to copy and use should they appear "workable" in your situation. There is nothing sacred about any of the suggestions offered, so please personalize them to suit your own unique needs and the needs of your children. *The ultimate usefulness will come when your students learn to apply the techniques to their daily work.*

High school and college students may use the ideas from Chapters 4 through 9 directly as sources of enrichment for their already *well established* study skills. Weaker subject areas can be strengthened by applying some of these new techniques.

In the brief *Closing Section*, you will find help for revising plans as your students become more successful and move along toward independence.

Capitalizing on your interest, your caring, and your commitment of time, let us get started!

Chapter 1

Motivation

Looking at Sources of Motivation
Reviewing Study Skill Shaping Strategies
Learning About Rewards
Trading for Power and Self-Esteem in Accomplishment
Learning About Punishment

Parents:
Why don't you care more about school? I used to love school.

Students:
How come my sister is always on my back about school? She makes fun of me in front of her friends.

I'll never need to know any of this "junk" so why can't they teach me something I care about? What's in it for me?

Looking at Sources of Motivation

As a first step to helping students with their homework, we need to spend some time discussing the concept of *motivation*. There is a difference between motivation that comes from outside us called *extrinsic* and that which comes from within us called *intrinsic*. We all do activities without anybody telling us because we know it makes us feel good. This internal feeling of goodness is an example of intrinsic motivation.

The other type of motivation comes from outside. When we do things because somebody else expects us to do them, we are extrinsically motivated. We know there are consequences (good ones if we do do it, and bad ones if we do not do it). Extrinsic motivation can be used effectively with school children without apologies. Extrinsic motivation prepares our children for the work-a-day world, the negotiations involved in marriage, and the raising of their own children.

Of the two kinds of motivation, there is little we can do *directly* to increase motivation from within. This fact may be depressing, but I continue reading and hoping that somebody will come up with something very magical—some sort of a program—that will internally inspire children automatically. It would be great to have something that would allow all students to become very enthused about doing beneficial activities. Unfortunately, I do not know of anything like that, and I would advise you to be very leery of people who try to sell that sort of product to you through books, tapes, and other materials.

Internal motivation, however, does tend to increase when students feel good about themselves. Techniques that you use to heighten your children's extrinsic motivation and which allow them to be more successful and to feel more competent will help. The goal is to increase energizing self-statements such as: "I can handle this;" "I'm not a total failure;" and "Most of the time I am doing most of things I need to do to be successful." To the extent that we can build these positive self-statements, the likelihood that intrinsic motivation will grow on its own is greater. Motivation from within is more of an enabling source of strength that is generated slowly through being loved (and learning to love ourselves) and through being respected and supported. Experiencing success on a fairly regular basis and gaining recognition for it normally increases the internal motivation of ourselves and that of our children.

The types of behavior that respond to outside motivation are well matched to the topics in this book. For example, repetitive kinds of learning tasks tend to work well with outside motivational sources. In the later chapters, we will look more extensively at some of those activities. Such things as spelling drills, musical instrument practice, and increasing the number of minutes per day studying usually can be motivated effectively by outside sources.

Reviewing Study Skill Shaping Strategies

As you undertake the task of helping your children with their homework, use these basic principles whenever possible.

1. When using outside motivation, state your goals in positive instead of negative statements. This: "John will place his daily math paper in the brown folder on the bookcase before he leaves for his music lesson." Not this: "John will not throw his work around the room."

2. Get the specific information on what is needed for success. This: "Jane will remember two things during number facts trials: 1) Bring paper and pencil without a reminder. 2) Try each item on the worksheet before asking a question." Not this: "Jane will stop wasting time while practicing number facts."

3. Using specific behaviors, measure success in observable units or time. This: "During the science homework session, John will: 1) face forward in his seat; 2) use his materials quietly; and 3) use acceptable language." Not this: "John will try not to clown around while reading his science assignment."
4. Limit ways to fail. This: "Jane will keep her phone privileges if she laughs only once while doing the geography map." Not this: "Jane must stop all talking out or she will lose her telephone privileges for the day."
5. Use immediate rewards instead of future ones. This: "John will earn one punch for each worksheet independently completed before bedtime and placed in his school folder. Punches will be given as earned on his own card. Punches will be traded each Friday for a food treat." Not this: "If John does not turn any papers in late this week, a good report on Friday afternoon will be rewarded with a food treat."
6. Find specific and appropriate recognition for achievement (example for grade 3). This: "John may earn one model airplane part for each evening he has homework and 1) remembers to try each item before asking a question; 2) remembers to proofread his spelling words (give examples of right and wrong); and 3) remembers to put his completed worksheets in his folder." Not this: "John will receive three flower stickers for a perfect day."
7. If needed, modify the program quickly after evaluation (more than one week but less than two). Consider the following factors: Smaller steps? Different rewards? Delivered differently? Rework or reword goals.
8. Keep the goals fairly limited in any time span. Work on no more than three or four goals at one time.

By using these strategies, nagging may be avoided. No parent chooses deliberately to nag, but almost all of us nag occasionally because we fall into the trap of "What else can I do?"

Learning About Rewards

Let us talk about some positive suggestions to build motivation. These are called positive reinforcers—rewards. Examples of negative factors or negative reinforcers sometimes are considered to be punishment. Later we will look at some choices there also, because there are times when punishment is effective. Also, there is the choice of pairing positive and negative factors. In *Chapter 3*, we will look at some contracts that do just that.

Here are several methods of providing positive rewards that should help you to encourage your children. You will notice that what is rewarding to adults is generally rewarding to those younger. The list is by no means complete. It contains some ideas to start you thinking!

- attention
- touch (hugs)
- praise
- free time
- food
- choice of work or tasks
- music
- money
- activities
- awards
- charting
- extended hours
- trips
- tickets to events
- nods
- objects (parts of craft kits, modeling kits, recreational equipment

Having scanned the list, perhaps more information on some of your choices may be helpful.

Attention can be unbelievably rewarding. Sitting with your children and doing nothing but looking and listening can be overwhelming to them; it is something that some children have never experienced. You do not have to engage in expensive activities or say profound things. In many families, the gift of time truly is more valuable than money. Even very young children "know" this concept without ever having been taught the value of attention from a parent.

Touch is increasingly recognized for its enormous power in communication. A literal "pat on the back" may be worth a thousand pompous words as may a hug, a tap, or a nudge. Body signals, such as a wink or smile, can also quietly send caring and support when it cannot be publicly or loudly communicated.

Praise is a free gift that most of us thrive on when it is honestly given. For example, it is best to comment on specific aspects of behavior instead of globally praising a student. Examples of specific praise are such statements as: "The perspective in your barn drawing is especially accurate and it makes the picture so realistic;" or "Your putting strokes on the greens today were your most efficient ever." Love should not be tied to accomplishment. Love applies to the student's total self-worth.

Examples of more global praise which begin to hint of self-worth statements are: "What an artist you are, I love your barn drawing;" or "Boy, I am proud to be your dad today, the guys couldn't believe your golf game in the tournament." Do not be confused. Your children need to know and hear that you love and appreciate them, but for themselves, not for their honors!

Free time is giving your children time to do whatever is reasonable for a certain period. If you think it is not valued, take it away and see how negative that can be. We all tend to take freedom for granted. When somebody starts telling us, "You will do this at this hour for me in this room," most of us tend to bristle. Maybe we need to remind children that their free time is not necessarily unlimited. Then, when we offer "an hour at the shopping mall because all your work is completed," it may be more appreciated.

Food can be useful as a reward as long as you do not have a child with a serious dietary or weight problem. For most of us who take pleasure in eating, however, there are strong food preferences, and a food reward once a week works well for many children. The possibilities are endless. Decisions need to be made regarding whether an individual packet is best (candy bar) or whether a part of a larger meal (whole pizza for the entire family) should be offered. By no means must food always be a heavy sweet. For younger children there are several nutritious, low calorie, "non-messy" favorites such as raisins, cheese balls, and so forth.

Choice of work style. How students will do their homework and in what order can be important choices. For example, choosing to do math before social studies or to do spelling before dinner and leave math until last are very rewarding decisions. Say to a child: "As long as you can get your homework done well, it is up to you to decide how you want to do it. This is your work. This is your business. If you show me you can handle it, I will not interfere. If you show me you cannot handle it, I will help make plans for you." The sense of "ownership" yields the benefit of self-esteem when work is successfully completed independently.

Music is extremely powerful with middle and high school students. No matter what their choice of music, almost all children enjoy music and almost all of them have a way to play it. Some research surveys report that many of today's students study rote material better against a *moderate volume* of background music. This technique seems to raise concentration to a competitive level against the sound and makes the task more relaxing and focused. Music can also be used as a study break with two or three songs providing a total rest from concentration. Ear phones are available for occasional use at reasonable sound levels if more than one student in your home is using this system as a reward.

Money is a most powerful motivator, and I make no apology for it being listed as a motivator. Money is powerful for adults and it is powerful for students. A big mistake, however, is to offer large amounts of cash for grades. Each of your children may have somewhat different intellectual potentials, and grade comparisons involving money are unfair. Depending upon family circumstances, this choice may be a poor one altogether. Even if the providers are non-parents (such as grandparents), the parents' responsibility is to control the amount offered and the "understanding" (control) agreed upon. The value of money is often traded for activities or objects, so we will look at those choices next.

Activities, such as certain kinds of events, (a movie on Saturday, the football game on Friday, for example) work well as outside motivators. Again there are various possibilities available to you: tickets to a single event; allowance for an activity and a friend to do the activity together; and short term events (such as one rock concert) to long term involvements (such as allowance to participate in a sporting activity for an entire season) should be considered. Sometimes the school itself may impose study/grade standards for participation. Generally, any positive social experience is potentially valuable to students and should be strongly considered as a growth experience. It goes without saying that such activities should be well planned and appropriately supervised for the age of the participants.

Objects, such as equipment needed for the activities just mentioned, also work well. Sometimes the cost is great enough that a long term plan may be needed, but often even small school supplies (such as magic markers and crayons) will be enough.

Awards, if used sparingly, and perhaps, with a bit of humor occasionally, can be fun and flattering. They convey the message that someone is noticing and choosing something that highlights the student's unique personality style. In these terms even a quickly made paper "badge" for the day or week can be fun and inspire the student to continued effort. Photos of activities are pleasurable to review and can be a reward in themselves.

Charting can become pleasurable as a self monitoring device. This is more powerful if the choice of chart matches the task or the student's personality and grade level. Methodical children tend to especially value charts, and disorganized children can often become more focused by using this approach.

Trading for Power and Self Esteem in Accomplishment

Young children have very short attention spans. Sometimes the reward that is offered is available only after a long time. A "space filler" or "account builder" is often needed to tie the desired behavior to the overall goal. Tokens can be awarded for accomplishments, saved, and turned in for a reward later. Review the list below for some ideas of token counters.

poker chips
stickers
toothpicks
paper clips
packing fill
punches
popsicle sticks
card tears
puzzle pieces
coloring parts
time recording
buttons
kernels of corn
beads
grocery cost counter
stop watch timings
stamped images

In some situations you will need a plan to let your child know every few minutes that you have noticed a good effort. Generally, the more difficult the task, the younger the child, or the slower the child, the more likely you will need to use short term goals. If you think your child needs a reminder every ten minutes that you are noticing, there are endless counter items that can be given. As you are checking that your student is doing what is assigned, you will be ready to dispense a counter item or make a "marker."

Figure 1 contains one example of a marker system, a *This Day Card*. A brief listing of the work to be done for the day is made along with a box for a punch to be placed. As each piece of work is checked for completion, a punch is made in the card. If your student can earn two out of three punches on this card, a reward is given—a chance to go outside and shoot baskets for 30 minutes, for example. Your child must have at least two of the three punches on the card. Put the date on this three by five card and save it as part of a weekly plan. If, at the end of the week, your child can get five out of seven rewards, another bonus is given—a ticket to a local basketball game. This idea also works well if you need to break a task down into various steps. Your student can feel successful most of the time with more short term projects. You may help your child to make inner statements of confidence such as, "I can do it for ten minutes at night and feel good about myself."

Figure 1

This Day Card

(Elementary)

Name Donna **Date** Sept. 10

Task No. 1 FINISH SPELLING WORDS ☐

Task No. 2 DO LAST 2 MATH PROBLEMS ☐

Task No. 3 READ BOOK FOR 10 MIN. ☐

If you do not have a punch, card tears serve in much the same way. Give the students cards and let them make tears around the edges. If one tear is made on each side and the goal was four, your student has made the goal. These techniques do not need to be expensive. Poker chips are used in school settings a great deal. Marbles, buttons, stickers, toothpicks, paper clips, and packing fill pieces all make good counter items and can be recycled daily or weekly. Time recordings could also be used. Let your student stop and write/record something with a magic marker that you reserve just for this special use.

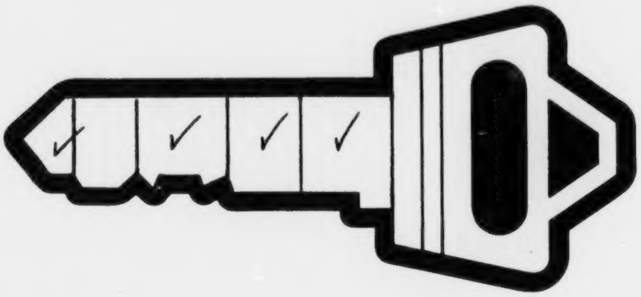
The above ideas are used as "trade items." They are not the full rewards themselves, but they are later exchanged for something else that is the actual reward. Maybe you can only afford to give the big reward on Friday night; the "big reward" is a pizza. What you will give every night is 40 cents towards getting a share of a large pizza on Friday night. If your child can receive 40 cents for five out of seven nights, that is enough money to buy a share of a large pizza. You are helping to avoid the feeling of, "Gee, that is a lot of work day after day when nothing is received."

In this way students always receive something. They will have the feeling that their power is building. "My savings account is growing and pretty soon I will be able to buy (with my paper clips) whatever it is that I want." It is the same principle of our own banking, just used differently. If loose items are used, a storage container may be needed—one that is transparent or can be displayed in some fashion. It too can serve as a visual reminder that "the power is growing and I am making it happen. I am capable."

Figure 2

Michael's Key to Success

(Elementary)



Another valuable technique is time charting. A sample is shown in Figure 2 as it was used by Michael for a counting device in trading. An outline of a key was cut from pieces of 3 x 5 construction paper. Each day a new "Key to Success" was taped on the desk at school and brought home each evening. The shaft of the key was divided into five sections of "paperwork attempted without crying or angry words." The boxes represented: 1) morning to recess; 2) morning recess to noon, 3) afternoon to recess, 4) afternoon recess to home; and 5) the homework period at home. Michael awarded himself a check if the adult and he both agreed it was deserved. A goal of three checks per day was reached by day four. The goal was later raised to four checks and then five checks for a bedtime payoff of game playing for thirty minutes after homework.

This system was further enhanced by color-coding the keys for the days of the week: Monday was blue; Thursday was orange; and so forth. By saving all keys by color, a monthly payoff was received. There was special value in this coding because Mondays and Fridays tend to be more stressful days for many students (weekend aftermath and anticipation) and more attractive incentives could be offered for certain colors.

Learning About Punishment

Now, let us look briefly at some factors that would be considered punishment. Here are some possibilities:

loss of rewards
loss of control
addition of unwanted attention... duties... and more

Generally, the more the punishment can be related to the error, the more effective it may be in teaching your student a lesson. I want to emphasize the goal in using punishment to improve study habits should never be to humiliate or hurt, but to assist in your student's understanding of responsibilities.

I would recommend adding punishment to the formula *only* if rewards were unsuccessful or only partly successful. Avoid punishment as a first choice. It can build resentment and resistance if used frequently or handled angrily.

Punishment should last only long enough to teach the lesson well and the lesson should include *what to do* and not just *what not to do*. If this is not done, we often eliminate the negative and still do not have the positive we desired. Avoid a statement like, "Stop looking around when you study" and use a more specific "to do" statement such as, "Keep your eyes on the book and notebook for the entire five-minute reading period and then take a rest break."

One definition of punishment is the loss of any of the rewards we just reviewed. "You lost it because you could not handle it, so this week there are not going to be any activities. You will have to earn them back as you show me you can be responsible." Loss of control of time, access to friends or activities for a brief period can be extremely powerful. You can also teach them by the addition of unwanted attention such as criticism. Write a note that says, "You let yourself down and here's why. Let's talk about it." Rework the plan somehow to make it more effective.

The addition of some duty that you, as a parent, normally do can be effective punishment. This approach is probably the least desirable of the choices but it has been used very effectively by some parents. Say, "You owe the family some time this week because you used your time very poorly last week. Some of the things you can do with the forty-five minutes you owe us every night this week are: You can empty the wastebaskets; you can wash and vacuum the car; or you can take care of the garbage. I do these every week and I do not think of them as punishment. This week you do them and free up a little time for me."

Chapter 2

Communication

Considering Message Forms
Choosing Message Senders
Sending the Messages

Parents:
How many times do I need to tell you to **study more** *and bring home better grades?*

Students:
I ***am*** *trying, but you don't believe me.*

Can't somebody just listen to **my** *side for once?*

I never can ask any study questions at home because I'm babysitting little kids every night and there are no adults around. My parents both have to work two jobs.

Nobody ever says anything about school to me unless it's to gripe about the bad stuff? What about the **good** *report I brought home yesterday?*

Considering Message Forms

There are various ways that rewards and punishment can be communicated, but families tend to fall into traditional patterns of communication. Here are a few methods of communication:

spoken face to face
written in a note
prepared cards
telephoned
posted in "family message place"
tape recorded
message "in gift"

Occasionally, using a different method of communication might be useful. The surprise effect of doing something differently could really get your child's attention. We need to reexamine our communication processes and modify our message forms to convey our message most effectively in each specific situation and for each specific child.

You could write a note to your child telling how you feel about something and what you expect. Writing is very powerful. The note could be personalized by color or stickers. If you wish, you could buy a prepared card that has a message you want to convey.

If you find it necessary to be absent from home, you could telephone your child from work or from the other important activities you must attend. Many parents say to me, "I work evenings, therefore I can never help my children with any homework or even check their homework." Then I ask, "Do you get a break?" "Yes." "Is there a phone in the break room?" "Yes." I suggest, "Could you call home and say, 'Please read your English to me; I would like to hear it. It was to be done by 8:00 o'clock'." Why not try this once a week if your child has an assignment that can be read to you. The calls could be unscheduled or preplanned, whatever works best. Your children could also be required to call you. Absence does not mean you cannot show your love and extend your influence over children of any age. The sheer surprise of such a technique, occasionally may "knock their socks off!" Gaining such attention also helps to build motivation.

Most families have a family message center. It could be the refrigerator door, a bulletin board by the back door, or any other convenient location. You could leave messages of encouragement or warning there. Your messages could even be humorous! Studies have shown that humor is useful with children in keeping their interests *up* and their defenses *down*. This would be a great opportunity to surprise them once in a while with something funny, but something from which they would get the message. Many greeting cards are created in this manner. Changing the messages frequently helps build interest.

Some parents have tape recorded messages for their students. Nearly every home now has a tape player, and it does not *always* have to play hard rock! You may buy a few inexpensive tapes and record needed messages on them. Again, this could be when you could use some humor as a reward. The tapes provide a similar effect to telephoning, but without the opportunity of responding.

There are affordable gifts that have a message with them, for example a small figurine that says something, or decorated magnets or other items. It is essential to remember to reward *effort* and not just results.

Choosing Message Senders

In many cases the same message sent from another person can do double duty! The message sender need not always be you—the parent. Involving a variety of people helps to keep the process interesting and it sometimes is more effective. Some other possible message senders are:

teachers
counselors
school psychologists
principals
older students
classmates
youth leaders

Big Brothers/Sisters
probation officers
ministers
relatives
coaches
neighbors
older siblings

Message senders can be other significant adults or older friends to your children. Sometimes, a neighbor, a grandmother, a coach, or a mentor may be the more appropriate person to communicate a particular message. In many homes there are older children who will provide the homework supervision while they babysit. If so, they are the ones who should be handling the messages with your support. Your children must understand that you have authorized these messages.

I do not want to leave you with the impression that because you are the parent, you are the person who always *must* supervise your children's efforts directly. Having made the commitment to work with your children, you share the responsibility to see that homework gets done, but that does not mean you are the only person who can provide the necessary assistance and supervision.

Sending the Messages

You may use all the concepts you have learned about motivation and communication as you create and modify your own system for helping your children with their homework. Choose ideas that will work for you.

You might choose to have either a formal or an informal system. In a formal system of evaluation and consequences, you might say: "Every Sunday night at 7:00 o'clock we will sit down and decide if this plan worked or if it didn't." In an informal system, you might say: "Once a week and before 9:00 o'clock on Sunday, we will make some time to do this."

However, if you plan to be informal, please be sure that you do it! The danger of using a very informal system is that it is so easy for 10:00 o'clock Sunday to arrive with your children in bed and no planning and evaluation was done. With busy schedules next week, soon it is not just the child who is challenging the system, you are challenging it also!

You may choose when and how to provide appropriate praise. To praise your child privately is one possibility. If you choose to praise your child in front of brothers and sisters, the effect may be more powerful because others may have thought this child is the "dummy" in the family. Here is the child that always had the bad grades and now a parent is saying, "That was the most convincing essay you ever wrote, and I want you to read it for all of us right after dinner." This setting makes the praise more effective because now you have done it in a family environment where the child received an audience. It added prestige that was needed. It will contribute to building self-esteem.

Once some accountability is demonstrated, let your children reward themselves. You have established that you have trustworthy and informed children. Use messages such as: "You can go do the activity after you have telephoned me and said you have finished your assignment. I will trust you because you are completing all your work. We have not had a problem for two weeks. Although I will be gone tonight, I know I can trust you to do that with no problem. I will find the paper when I arrive home." With statements such as this, the parents are allowing their children to reward themselves after they finish the required tasks.

Let me make a closing comment about rewards generally. You must use common sense about what would be important to your children. Be practical in determining your ability to furnish rewards. Do not over-reward your children. When rewarding, remember there are many rewards that cost no money. Time, communication, love, and touch are extremely valuable and they are available at no monetary cost. Disburse rewards in a manner which will avoid jealously or unreasonable competition among children.

Chapter 3

Commitment

Considering Informal Contracts/Charts
Considering Formal Contracts

Parents:
How are we ever going to stay organized? We've been through this same discussion too many times.

Students:
I am organized some of the time; it is just the science and art classes that I'm always behind in.

You only care when the report card comes home.

I guess I'm just not "cut out" to be a top student like my brother.

I'm tired of your threats—go ahead and bench me for not studying. I don't care. I'll never earn that bike by this summer, so why try now?

Considering Informal Contracts/Charts

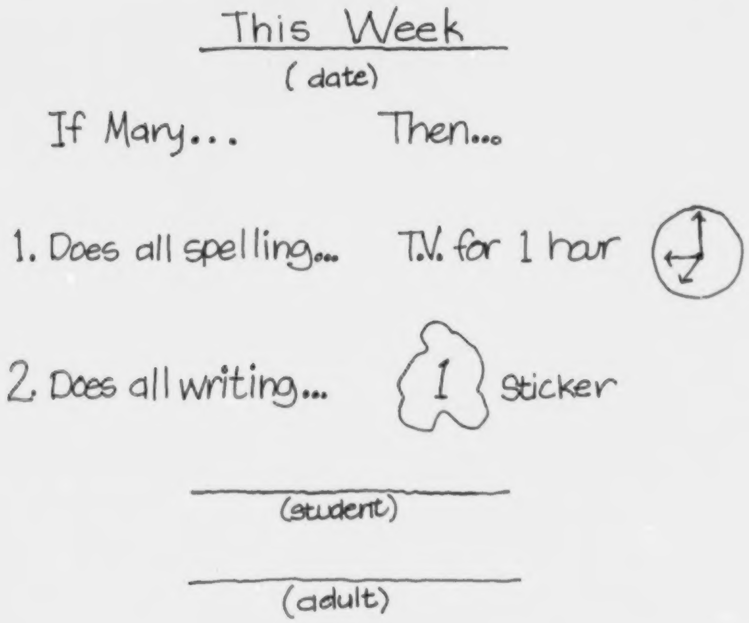
Once you understand motivation, rewards, and methods of communication, let us move on to the question of: "How can I make a plan that will work each day or each week?" We will start by looking at a very simple contracting system for elementary school students. In setting up a study contract with a student, it is important that you should always agree on *what* needs to be done, *where* it will be done, *what time* it will be done, and *how* it will be done. These are all important elements that you need to have in the plan.

Consider a very simple contract that does not have all those words on it. Such a contract would be appropriate for a first or second grader. You will date your agreement. For very young children, you would simply say: "This is for today or this is for tonight." When working with primary students (grades kindergarten through grade 2), a one-day duration is probably the most appropriate time span.

Figure 3

Mary's Contract

(Elementary)



This Week

(date)

If Mary...   Then...

1. Does all spelling...   T.V. for 1 hour

2. Does all writing...   1 sticker

(student)

(adult)

Our sample, Figure 3, simply says, "If Mary does all of her spelling, she earns television viewing time from 7:00 to 8:00 (shown in clockface with these hours outlined). Mary need not tell time to understand that if she does her spelling, she has earned the right to watch television from 7:00 to 8:00 on that particular evening.

The second part of this contract says, "If Mary does all her writing (which might mean simply finishing two or three sentences at the bottom of a worksheet begun during the school day), she has earned one sticker (with a sticker serving as its own pictogram)." Notice that two people sign this contract. Students should always print or sign their names; they are the essential persons in these agreements. It gives them a source of pride that they have committed themselves to the contract. The other important person here is a responsible adult; whoever is home with the child and will provide the payoff to the child. Such a contract can be made on colorful paper and "decorated" with drawings or borders if so desired.

Fairness in contracts is essential. Both parents and children should believe the contracts are as binding as any legal agreements. We are asking children to work hard. We should recognize that they deserve something in return to show that someone is noticing their hard work and effort.

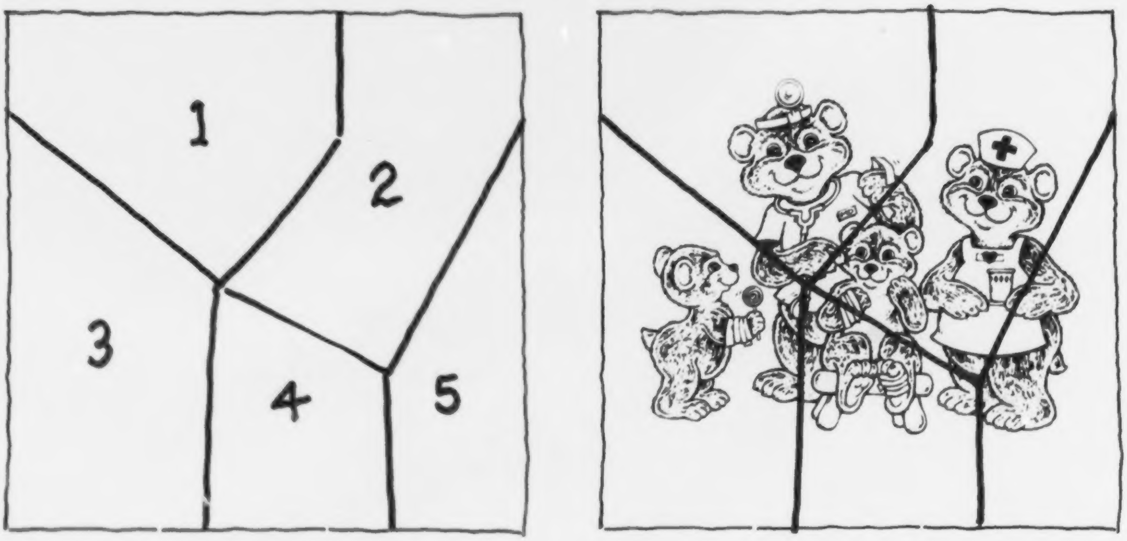
Another consideration when setting up contracts for young children is limiting the item list. First and second graders typically can handle no more than two separate tasks in any given evening. Even if there are several tasks to do, decide what is essential and take care of that first. Delay some work until a second or third night, if necessary. For the older elementary child, you might use a contract as long as three or four lines. But, keep in mind as children become fatigued or bored with the material, it is much more likely your efforts will be seen as a hassle instead of as help. You may end up with mutual bad feelings for your effort.

Let us discuss some simple examples that are charts for very young children. They can help you to keep track of how well your child is doing and perhaps they will be fun activities for the child as well. A diagram for a five- or six-piece puzzle has proven effective (Figure 4). First trace around the outside edges of a greeting card or small poster. Cut and number the pieces on the back side and trace in the *internal* lines for each *individual* piece on the blank outline.

Figure 4

Puzzle Chart

(Elementary)



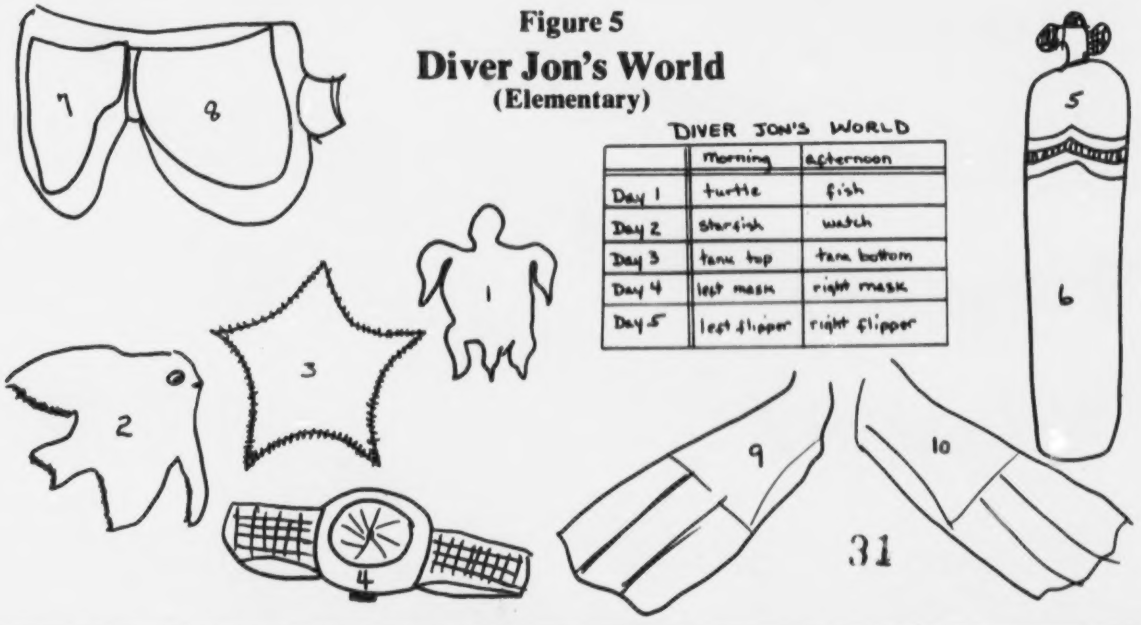
Place the pieces in an envelope and attach the envelope to the outlined poster. This idea is fun because it serves as a surprise for your child. What the picture will be is often not known until it is completed. As your child finishes task number one, permission is given to go through the envelope of pieces, to find piece number one and to tape it or glue it over the pattern. Within two to four days, your child will be able to see the total picture. If pasting is too advanced for your young child, a number design to color could also be used by choosing pictures from a coloring book. You can double the benefit of these approaches by letting your children give these as gifts or post them in prominent places. The message they carry is: "I did this." Hence a chart of progress becomes a reward in itself.

Another way of using coloring as a charting/recordkeeping device is to choose a theme and personalize the objects to be colored. In one example with a boy named Jon, a goal of "all work completed at school" was employed with checkpoints midday and at the end of the day used for recording progress (Figure 5). The outlined objects to be colored were taken from a deep diving theme. The various pieces of equipment from the diver's world were traced on a sheet of paper. Numbers were assigned to the various objects to indicate the order in which they were to be colored. Time was allowed once each morning and once each afternoon to color the object if the work was completed. If the goal was not met, the object could not be colored. At the end of the week, the number of colored objects could be "traded in" for different payoffs. Interest was maintained for this third grader by eventually letting him choose the objects to be colored by letting him trace them from a magazine.

Figure 5

Diver Jon's World

(Elementary)



DIVER JON'S WORLD

	morning	afternoon
Day 1	turtle	fish
Day 2	starfish	watch
Day 3	tank top	tank bottom
Day 4	left mask	right mask
Day 5	left flipper	right flipper

Another idea is to chart around a fantasy character from the movies, comics, or television. "Scottman" was created for a young child named Scott by tracing and sketching a cartoon character on the left side of a sheet of paper. Two behavioral goals were listed to the right of the drawing along with a chart detailing which two parts of the drawing could be colored each day of the week when the goals were attained (Figure 6). The main target here was to keep Scott focused for a fifteen-minute study period each weekday evening at home without "roughhousing" with a younger brother and sister.

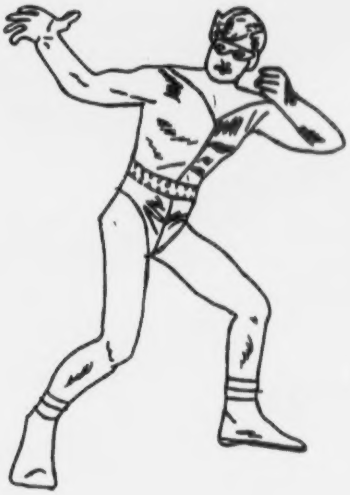
Figure 6

Help Make "Scottman" Come to Life

(Elementary)

1. Scott will not touch others unless it is to help them in some way.

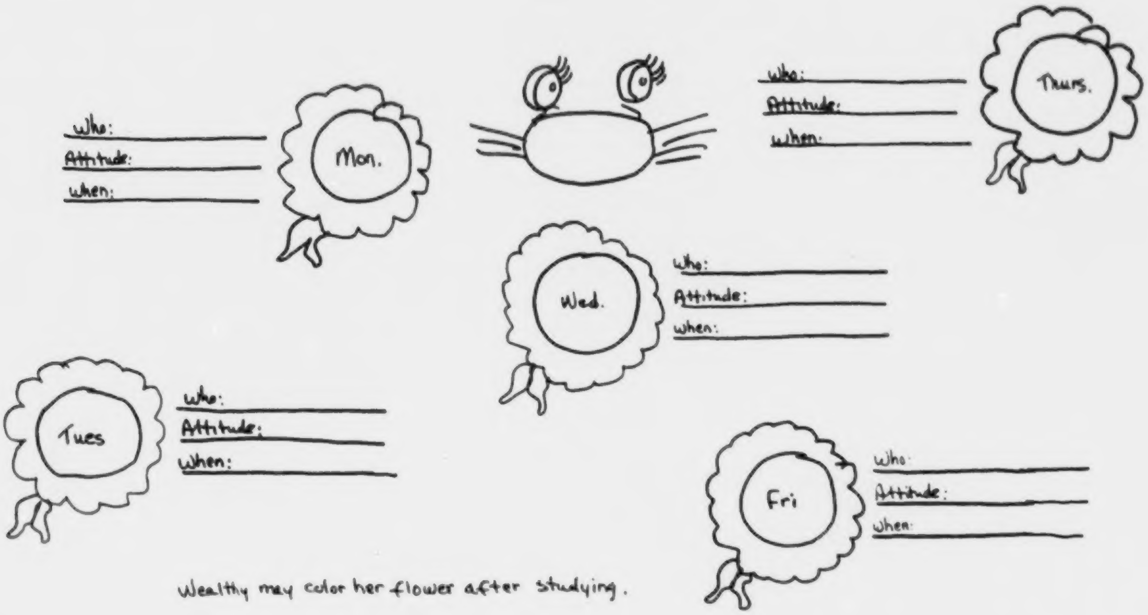
2. Scott will be ready to do his work and be prepared to follow instructions fully.



Mon.	hair	arm
Tues.	leg	foot
Wed.	arm	leg
Thurs.	foot	chest
Fri.	trunks	belt & mask

Sometimes coloring can be used to "decorate" a recording of information needed between home and school. To encourage Wealthy to study her spelling words at home, she was allowed to color in the flowers drawn on the feedback sheet from her mother to her second grade teacher. The information was just as accurate and much more fun to offer to her teacher once she "glamorized" it (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Watch Wealthy Learn
(Elementary)



Wealthy may color her flower after studying.

Because young children have such short attention spans, it is sometimes helpful to use a simple timing device, such as an oven timer. You can encourage your children to work for ten minutes. Once you are certain your children know what the instructions are, leave them alone to work, much as they are expected to work on their own in the classroom. The children sit at a table or some other agreed upon place and they are expected to work until the timer rings. The ticking reminds them that "This is work time, I should be doing something."

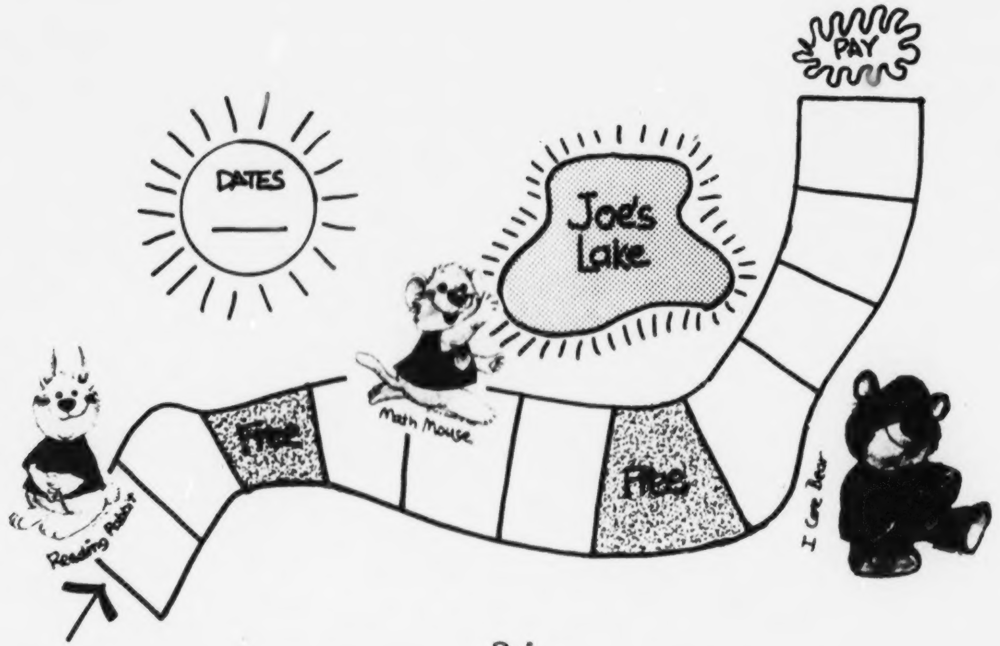
A similar idea to the timer would be to give a child a "starting set" of counters, such as poker chips, straws, or whatever is readily available in your house. Items can be used again. You would say: "You are starting your evening's work with three poker chips. You will work for fifteen minutes tonight on your reading worksheet. I will put the poker chips in front of you and I will look in on you at least three different times in the next fifteen minutes. When I look at you, if you are working and you are making a very good effort, I will stay away because I know you are doing what needs to be done. If I look in here and you are daydreaming, wadding up your paper, or pouting, I will walk over and take a chip away from you. You will have lost that chip for the night."

This plan is discussed ahead of time and the child knows the chips that are left at the end of the task can be traded for some reward. Requiring a chip for each fifteen minutes of television time is one example. If the child has lost a chip, it might mean being permitted to watch only one thirty-minute program tonight. The chips could also be traded for a food reward or a chance to talk on the telephone to a friend, with each chip worth five minutes of telephone time.

Another possibility, using a different type of visual aid, is to use a game set-up. A short roadside journey for young elementary children is a favorite. A large sheet of construction paper or poster size paper is preferable to an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet because large "steps" are needed to make the project game-size (Figure 8). The idea is to get to the end of the winding sidewalk by the end of the week. Small stickers can be used to create characters. Simply glue them on heavy paper and cut around them as shown. You could have a reading rabbit and a math mouse working their way down the pathway for the week. However, a more generic "I Care Bear" can be used successfully as well. For each worksheet completed successfully that earned a grade, the small characters "walk" their way down the pathway.

Figure 8

Roadside Journey Chart
(Elementary)



You can individualize this idea while also making it a contract. Place the child's name on a roadside "lake" and the date of that particular week in the "sunshine" above the road. Give a payoff if the characters reach the end of the road by the end of the week. If you have two elementary children in the family, *sometimes* it is appropriate to have them each working a pathway or for the pathway to be a road race.

An idea for a fourth or fifth grade student might be a football, baseball, or basketball game. To design a chart around a football game, use an 11 X 14 green sheet of construction paper and draw a replica of a football field, including end zones. The "teams" can be represented by different colored balls matching local school colors. The ball moves up and down the field. Perhaps a child could play against a parent. For each worksheet completed, the student moves the football ten yards. The goal is to make a touchdown by the end of the week. The parent moves the other football forward if there is some studying that is neglected. The child is, in a sense, doing one's best to advance against an opponent. The real opponent is disinterest or frustration, but the child often sees the opponent as the parent who is rating the behavior.

A second example of a game format could be a bowling theme (Figure 9). The scorecard for the school week would be the ten-box format used in regular bowling with a *spare* indicating a certain portion of the work completed and a *strike* indicating that all the goals are met for the day. The game is completed in five days. The goals for the scoring system should be placed on the tally sheet where the daily scores are recorded.

A bit more grown-up look to earning points can be obtained by creating a "Bank Book" with a specified number of weeks listed on the "account." Enthusiasm may be increased by gluing a picture of the item to be earned on the back. Earnings can be tallied and even moved into an actual savings account if money is used as the counting device. A periodic deposit is needed for motivation and progress to grow together.

A more sophisticated banking system can also be created for an older student who enjoys the challenge of establishing an earning and matching system. The advantage with this technique is that each day or each effort starts positively. For example, John Doe had four daily goals (stated elsewhere in a contract) and therefore four tokens for success were offered at the *outset*.

Four tokens were given each morning and four more could be earned by the end of the day—matching one for one each day. The student had to give back one token for each of the four goals unmet. Parents eventually gave activity or object rewards which were paid for with the tokens. Different prices for various rewards were posted.

Figure 9

Bowling Chart

(Upper Elementary/Middle School)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student and parent together score each day for a morning and afternoon period. (The school will need to provide this information on a checklist). The goal is to obtain the highest score possible (300 as in conventional bowling).

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday	Frame 1	Frame 2
Tuesday	Frame 3	Frame 4
Wednesday	Frame 5	Frame 6
Thursday	Frame 7	Frame 8
Friday	Frame 9	Frame 10

Goals

1. Work is turned in on time.
2. Work is rechecked and initialed.
3. Work is taken home on the day it is returned by the teacher.
4. The student has a serious attitude while working (demonstrated and agreed to by the student).

Scoring

3 points = Met 1 goal for the time period.
6 points = Met 2 goals for the time period.
9 points = Met 3 goals for the time period.
Spare = Met all four goals for the time period (either morning or afternoon).
Strike = Met all four goals for time period and all papers graded as C or better.

Considering Formal Contracts

Formal contracts for middle and high school students can facilitate the use of rewards, punishments, and message forms. Completed examples of four contract styles will be shown. Blank contracts for your use follow these examples.

The first contract (Figure 10) simply states, "Before a student can have a certain type of payoff, the student will complete certain duties." Before the pleasure must come the responsibility. This is an excellent contract for the child with good intentions who agrees to study and then gets distracted with the fun before doing the work. It is helpful to break this bad habit early. *Contract One: Work Before Reward* is designed to have up to four lines with signatures across the bottom for the child and whomever will monitor the progress. Scan the example and then try to complete the blank contract that follows if you and your child agree this contract applies to your situation.

Some fill-ins for this style of contract could state, "Before John can talk on the phone from 8:00 to 9:00 on school nights, John will have all language arts worksheets completed and ready for me to initial by 8 o'clock." Now, if the sheets are not done by 8 o'clock, John does not get the use of the phone. This gives you some control. You are not telling John that he has to do it at 6 o'clock, when he wants to talk to his girlfriend. You are not telling him he cannot finish his dinner until he does it. You are leaving him a choice and some dignity. "You do not get the phone if you do not get the language arts sheets finished and initialed by 8 o'clock. They are your job. If you have questions, let us talk about it. Remember, if they are not ready by 8 o'clock, you have lost the phone for the evening. Do not approach me at 8:25, with 'Can I have another hour?' No." That makes it John's job to do the work. You are not the "heavy" because you did not take the phone away. John "had" the phone until he lost it. You are not the bad person; you gave John phone privileges. John lost the phone privileges. This is a big issue; it is not hair splitting. Losing track of who owns the problem causes a great deal of rebellion in teenagers.

Refer to line two of the contract and read. "Before John can earn one dollar each Friday towards a music tape, John will bring home all needed study materials and create a study plan for the weekend." John then sits down, makes a weekend study plan, and shows it to you. Stating something such as, "I've got four items on here, Mom, and here is that book for item one, the science worksheets for item two, and the colored pencils for item three. I will do those assignments. I am all organized and I plan to start on this tomorrow afternoon."

You, as the parent, can then say with relief, "In one more week you will have your tape. You are doing what you need to do and I am noticing. This is a good project and I sense we are both feeling positive about this."

Please look at line three of the contract and note. "If John does all his math worksheets and he proofreads them to be sure all items are covered, then he may have acceptable friends over until 9 o'clock." What happens if John does not proofread the worksheets? Then the acceptable friends (and may they be many) cannot come over. Do not create binds with children in which there will be no limit to what you will pay if they do what you ask. I will guarantee you they will say, "You said friends, and he's my friend."

And you say, "Who is this kid on my front porch?"

So protect yourself by qualifying statements like *"acceptable* friends" and "music until a *specific* time." Be specific, because what you do not want to do is create more arguments with your children. You want to avoid such scenes and keep the focus on their responsibility.

Finally, line four states, "Before John may attend the football game Saturday afternoon, he must complete all four steps on his social studies maps." If he slaps them together and does half of them, that is not going to be enough. That casual approach is causing the "D" in social studies. John has violated the contract.

Figure 10

Study Contract One: Work Before Reward

(Secondary)

Name JOHN **Beginning Date** 1/12/87 **Ending Date** 1/23/87

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1. Before JOHN (student) can TALK ON PHONE FROM 8:00 - 9:00 P.M (privileges). [✓ He]/She will HAVE LANGUAGE ARTS WORK DONE & INITIALED BY 8:PM (duties).
2. Before JOHN (student) can EARN $1.00 EACH FRI. FOR A MUSIC TAPE (privileges). [✓ He]/She will BRING HOME ALL STUDY MAT AND DO PLAN FOR WEEKEND (duties).
3. Before JOHN (student) can HAVE ACCEPTABLE FRIENDS OVER UNTIL 9:00 PM (privileges). [✓ He]/She will COMPLETE & PROOFREAD ALL MATH WORKSHEETS (duties).
4. Before JOHN (student) can ATTEND THE FOOTBALL GAME ON SATURDAY (privileges). [✓ He]/She will COMPLETE ALL 4 STEPS ON SOCIAL STUDIES MAPS (duties).

John Grant
signature

Bob Grant
signature

Mary Grant
signature

signature

Figure 11

Study Contract One: Work Before Reward

(Secondary)

Name ______________________ **Beginning Date** __________ **Ending Date** __________

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1. Before __________ (student) can ______________________ (privileges). He/She will ______________________ (duties).
2. Before __________ (student) can ______________________ (privileges). He/She will ______________________ (duties).
3. Before __________ (student) can ______________________ (privileges). He/She will ______________________ (duties).
4. Before __________ (student) can ______________________ (privileges). He/She will ______________________ (duties).

signature	signature	signature	signature

The second contract looks a bit more simple than the first. The format says, "Student promises to" and "Parent promises to." This is a *good* contract to use with somewhat defiant students who tend to say things like, "I do my fair share but my parents never give me what they are supposed to give me. I do what I am supposed to do and they let me down continually. They said they were going to pay attention but they didn't. They said I could use the car if I raised my grades. I raised my grades and I didn't get the car anyway, so what's the use?" If you are dealing with a student who is angry about studying and may not readily be willing to give it a try again, this format obviously holds both parties equally responsible. They are equal co-partners. Each will have to give something in order to get something. Scan the example (Figure 12) and then negotiate items for the blanks if this is your situation.

You will notice that "Howard promises to have all art materials purchased by Wednesday, and Dad promises to pay for all materials plus a one dollar bonus for his effort." "Howard promises to bring home an assignment sheet which is completed each day, while Mom promises to check off items each night and to help Howard complete his chart."

Further fill-in possibilities for *Contract Two: Building Trust* read: "Howard promises to present a list of completed science projects for his parent's initials along with all required pages and Dad promises to allow Howard to cut the grass for Mrs. Davis on weekends." If you are wise, you will request evidence, especially at first, because students tend to say, "I did it. I really did it. It's all in my locker at school." Another possibility for *Contract Two: Building Trust* would be: "Howard will practice his trumpet for twenty minutes in the living room before 7:30 and Grandma promises to allow Howard to play his radio each evening until 9:30." Now, if Howard does not get around to practicing his trumpet until 9:15, he has forfeited the payoff by violating the contract. The reason Grandma will need the protection from "until 9:30" is she does not want Howard in the living room at 11:30 saying, "I'm practicing and then I will play my radio because that is what you said I could do."

Figure 12

Study Contract Two: Building Trust

(Secondary)

Name HOWARD **Beginning Date** 1-12-87 **Ending Date** 1-23-87

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs for each side of the contract. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1.	HOWARD (student)	promises to	HAVE ALL ART MATERIALS BY WED. (duties)	TOM (parent)	promises to	PAY FOR MATERIALS + $1.00 BONUS (duties)
2.	HOWARD (student)	promises to	BRING HOME AN ACURATE ASSIGNMENT SHEET EACH DAY (duties)	SUE (parent)	promises to	HELP CHECK OFF ALL ITEMS AND HELP COMPLETE CHART (duties)
3.	HOWARD (student)	promises to	PRESENT LIST OF COMP. SCIENCE PROJECTS FOR PARENT INITIALS (duties)	TOM (parent)	promises to	ALLOW GRASS CUTTING FOR MRS. DAVIS ON WEEKENDS. (duties)
4.	HOWARD (student)	promises to	PRACTICE TRUMPET FOR 20 MIN. IN EVENING BEFORE T.V. (duties)	HILDA ~~(parent)~~ GRANDMA	promises to	PERMIT RADIO PLAYING UNTIL 9:30 ON WEEK NIGHTS. (duties)

Howard Sullivan	Hilda Sullivan	Tom Sullivan	Sue Sullivan
signature	signature	signature	signature

Figure 13

Study Contract Two: Building Trust

(Secondary)

Name ______________________ **Beginning Date** __________ **Ending Date** __________

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs for each side of the contract. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1.	________ (student)	promises to	________________ ________________ (duties)	________ (parent)	promises to ________________ ________________ (duties)
2.	________ (student)	promises to	________________ ________________ (duties)	________ (parent)	promises to ________________ ________________ (duties)
3.	________ (student)	promises to	________________ ________________ (duties)	________ (parent)	promises to ________________ ________________ (duties)
4.	________ (student)	promises to	________________ ________________ (duties)	________ (parent)	promises to ________________ ________________ (duties)

____________ signature	____________ signature	____________ signature	____________ signature

A third type of a contract uses the simplest wording of all and can be considered an advanced contract. *Contract Three: Responsibility Rewarded* simply states the "student's duties are" and the "student's privileges are." It is an exact trade-off (Figure 14). In the sample, Diane's duties: complete spelling list by Wednesday; complete math sheets everyday; and complete book report every Friday are countered with Diane's privileges: attend Awana meetings on Wednesday; permission for telephone usage; and work opportunities.

If students behave responsibly, they can dole out the privileges to *themselves*. When you use *Contract Three: Responsibility Rewarded*, you have reached the point where even if you are not home, it is acceptable for your child to have a friend over for a brief period before they go to a basketball game. It is acceptable that popcorn was eaten because you later see that the work was done. The finished work was where you asked it to be placed. Again, this is an advanced contract, and it assumes that your students are now almost fully in control of their own studying.

Prepare the blank contract after discussing the example with your nearly independent student.

Figure 14

Study Contract Three: Responsibility Rewarded

(Secondary)

Name DIANE **Beginning Date** 1-12-87 **Ending Date** 1-23-87

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1. DIANE (student) does COMPLETE SPELLING LIST BY WED. (duties) then SHE MAY ATTEND AWANA MEETING ON WED. (privleges)

2. DIANE (student) does COMPLETE MATH SHEETS EVERYDAY. (duties) then MAY HAVE UNLIMITED PHONE USE FROM NOON SAT. THRU THE WEEKEND (privleges)

3. DIANE (student) does COMPLETE BOOK REPORTS EVERY FRIDAY (duties) then SHE MAY ACCEPT BABYSITTING JOBS ON SATURDAY NIGHT. (privleges)

4. ______ (student) does ______ (duties) then ______ (privleges)

Diane Morris — signature

Jan Morris — signature

______ — signature

______ — signature

Figure 15

Study Contract Three: Responsibility Rewarded

(Secondary)

Name ____________________ **Beginning Date** __________ **Ending Date** __________

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

1. __________ does ____________________ then ____________________
(student)
____________________ ____________________
(duties) (privleges)

2. __________ does ____________________ then ____________________
(student)
____________________ ____________________
(duties) (privleges)

3. __________ does ____________________ then ____________________
(student)
____________________ ____________________
(duties) (privleges)

4. __________ does ____________________ then ____________________
(student)
____________________ ____________________
(duties) (privleges)

______________ ______________ ______________ ______________
signature signature signature signature

A more involved contract that spans *both* home and school can also be written as shown in Figure 16. A conference should be requested to negotiate *who* is willing to do *what* to work out solutions. The students' responsibilities should definitely be listed first, as the primary ownership belongs to them.

In the example in Figure 16, Paul is a student in Ms. Brown's fifth grade class. He needs to finish his work at school with fewer reminders and he needs to be in his seat with his book and pencil. Ms. Brown is keeping a checklist of the results and releasing him early each day (twenty minutes) to enjoy a "paint by number" craft kit on horses (his hobby). She makes certain that Paul earns the reward fairly and she only allows the time if he does. As the teacher, Ms. Brown knows it is her responsibility to help Paul keep assignments accurately listed (this had been a part of the problem) and she helps Paul to plan adequate time (another part of the problem).

Figure 16

Home-School Team Contract

(Upper Elementary)

Name Paul **Beginning Date** 9-10-86 **Ending Date** 9-10-87

Grade 5 **Teacher** MRS. BROWN

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

Student will:
1. BE IN SEAT WHEN BELL RINGS.
2. HAVE NEEDED MATERIALS AT SEAT DURRING CLASS.
3. FINISH WORK ON TIME WITH 2 OF FEWER REMINDERS.

Teacher will:
1. HELP KEEP ASSIGNMENTS LISTED ACCURATELY.
2. HELP MAKE REALISTIC WORK PLANS
3. SCORE CHECKLIST AND RELEASE PAUL'S PAINT AT 3:30 IF EARNED

Psychologist will:
1. PROVIDE A WEEKLY CHECKLIST
2. PROVIDE A FOLDER, PENCIL AND WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT FORM.
3. HELP REVIEW OVERALL PROGRESS ON CONTRACT

Parents will:
1. READ & DISCUSS w/ PAUL THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S WEEKLY REPORT.
2. ADVISE TUTOR OF WEEKLY SCHOOL PROGRESS
3. PROVIDE AN OIL PAINTING KIT OF PAUL'S CHOOSING.

Paul Anders	Mrs. Brown	Mr.-Mrs. Tim Anders	Mrs J. Kuepper
signature	signature	signature	signature

Review Date 9-17-86

The school psychologist provides the necessary paperwork such as a checklist, a folder and a pencil to keep records, and a weekly assignment sheet.

The parents also make the agreements as noted. The school principal, Mrs. Reed, witnesses the plan in our example and sets a review date to check progress.

Some final reminders about contracts include: Contracts should always be dated. They should never be for an extended time period. If the plan is not going well, you will not want to continue to use what you already know is not working. For example, a week for middle school students would be a good contract length. Another consideration about contracts for older students is the contract should never have more than four items at one time. For some students, even four is too many. If the student has severe problems, one item well done would be far better than three poorly done. A statement such as: "For two weeks, we are going to work hard on just the one subject in which you received the F before we start looking at those courses in which you received D's," is most helpful.

Figure 17

Home-School Team Contract

(Upper Elementary)

Name ______________________ **Beginning Date** __________ **Ending Date** __________

Grade ______________________________________ **Teacher** __________

Instructions: Write in agreed upon duties and payoffs. *Be specific* in describing the tasks and rewards. Establish dates to begin and end the contract. Review the contract on the ending date. *All* persons involved in 1, 2, 3, and 4 should sign and *all* should review the contract.

Student will: 1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

Teacher will: 1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

Psychologist will: 1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

Parents will: 1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

signature	signature	signature	signature
		Review Date	__________

"X" out the items you do not want in the blank contract. Everyone who will work with this contract, whether as a doer or a payer, should sign it. Children should never be in a contract all by themselves. In fact, that is not a contract! All parties involved must remember that a need for change may happen along the way to insure success. Indeed, all parties may eventually agree that an entirely new approach may be warranted and the old contract is eliminated. If failure increases and frustration becomes more pronounced, such an action may be indicated.

Chapter 4

Major Study Skills

Honing Listening Skills
Unraveling Reading Strategies
Taking Note of Notetaking, Underlining, and Highlighting
Using Reference Sources

Parents:
Do you know what you are supposed to do and how to do it?

Students:
I don't now what she said—I guess I just spaced off.

I take notes, I wrote down all the terms the teacher put on the board today on this paper.

I just read chapter 3 twice and I still don't remember what it said. I guess I'll read it one more time.

I guess I don't belong in this class with "average" students. I can't ever find the "right" information when the teacher says "look it up" and I'm **not** *going to admit that when my friends are around. So I "fake it" and pretend to understand it or look bored.*

Honing Listening Skills

All good basic curriculums include units on listening skills for various grade levels. Your task is not to teach these techniques, but to reinforce and remind your student of these universal tips for improved listening:

1. When directions are being given, look at either the speaker or the example provided.
2. Write down key words, examples, diagrams, and emphasized topics to help focus your attention and for later review.
3. In most classrooms, the first few minutes and the last few minutes are usually critical listening times for directions and homework assignments (the very time that many distractible students are most likely to be socializing and disorganized students are hunting for supplies through book bags!).

4. Repeat the information back to the speaker for confirmation or correction if you are uncertain as to what was said. If you cannot get clarification from the teacher, then ask a classmate when an appropriate time arises.
5. Try to "guess" or anticipate what information will be given— uncover the basic plan the speaker is using. Common organizational patterns found throughout a day's listening may be:

   a) cause and effect
   b) rules/principles/definitions followed by examples
   c) comparison of similarities and differences
   d) chronological order or listing
   e) question and answer
   f) flow chart of procedures/events
   g) description—narrative
   h) dialogue—pro and con
6. Remember to listen to the questions, answers, and discussions between other students and the teacher because much can be learned from this source. Some upper level coursework is taught almost entirely in this "inquiry or exploration" method and the teacher will not be the only source of valuable information.
7. Take time to record what "I was doing just now when I wasn't listening" after concentration begins again and try to spot any patterns. Ask yourself these questions:

   a) Do I daydream more in some subject areas than others?
   b) Do I daydream more in some time periods than others?
   c) Do I distract myself on purpose sometimes, and if so why?
   d) Am I uncomfortable sometimes due to:

      hunger
      temperature
      thirst
      need for restroom

      Can I manage to meet these needs before a listening session?

   e) Do I allow nonschool issues to invade my thoughts on a regular basis? If so, find some person to talk over those issues with before or after class as much as possible.

Examples of listening checklists for various ages of students are shown in Figures 18 and 19. For Andrew, a young elementary student, the day has been divided into four time periods with a rating made each period (Figure 18). Morning and afternoon recesses, along with the lunch period, serve as break times. In the example, Andrew earns a point per period if he listens and this could be linked to some sort of reward. In the second example, a good effort is recorded "yes" and a poor effort is recorded "no." No direct point system is implied.

Figure 18

I Listened Well Card

(Elementary)

Instructions:
The teacher records one point for each time period that the goal of "I listened well" was met (for a total possible of four points). A zero is recorded for an unmet goal.

	Points
until morning recess	1
until noon lunch	1
noon	
until recess in afternoon	0
until close of school day	1
Total Points	3

Instructions:
The teacher records a "Yes" or a "No" to the goal attainment of "I listened well" based on observation of the student. Recording occurs for all four time periods.

I listened well!

a.m.	yes	recess	yes
noon	XXX	XXX	XXX
p.m.	no	recess	yes
Andrew	11/13/86	Wilson	
student	date	teacher	

Brian, a secondary school student, carried this "monitoring sheet" (Figure 19) to each class and obtained a rating from each teacher across several listening categories. Within a few days, a pattern often emerges showing which classes or time periods are most problematic. Once such pinpointing occurs, more specific questions oftentimes lead to changes. Seating, location away from friends, or reminder systems are frequently needed alterations. In order for a student to derive benefit from such a rating system, someone must review the results daily and discuss what needs to be done for improvement. The review period can also serve as the perfect opportunity to reward good effort.

Figure 19

Listening Summary

(Upper Elementary and Middle)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: Please circle one response in each category for the student and date shown at the top of this sheet.

	Did not talk without permission after the bell rang		Did not turn away from speaker		Did not draw pictures during class		Did not stop working before end of period	
Homeroom	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 1	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 2	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 3	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 4	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 5	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 6	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Period 7	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Unraveling Reading Strategies

Basic curriculums also usually include many exposures to building reading comprehension across grade levels. Again, the parents' role is not to teach these skills, but to encourage their consistent use. With your student, spend some time looking through each textbook and uncovering the author's plan.

Many systems of reading are taught and most work well for students. Most systems apply some form of advanced organizational skills. In general, the various systems suggest an order along these lines:

Step One:
Survey, skim, scan. Many terms are used, but all mean essentially the same—rapidly view the assignment and overview of the main topic and related subtopics; check the preview, review, maps, charts, pictures, bold type terminology, and other significant visual aids.

Step Two:
Mentally, if not on paper, propose questions to be answered by converting headings into questions. For example: Military Leaders in World War II would become, "Who were the military leaders in World War II?" Treaty Arrangements would become, "What were the treaty arrangements?" Peace at Last would become, "When did the peace come and how did the peace come about?"

Step Three
Think about what you already know concerning this topic and relate it to the new material as you carefully read it. Take extra time to understand new terms and procedures. Use information found in pictures, graphs, and charts.

Step Four:
Pause after each subsection to check for understanding by answering the pre-reading question(s).

Step Five:
Reread if the questions cannot be answered and then proceed to use the review questions at the end of the assignment.

Remember, books and handouts are used in coursework for different purposes such as:

1. A basic source of information. (Usually this will require thorough reading.)
2. An outside additional source of related information to be combined with lecture/laboratory. (Usually this will require reading of selected portions only.)
3. A reference source. (Usually this will require only short term, highly specific reading and may require scanning to find the correct location.)
4. A guide or flow chart. (This requires a step by step understanding, and if the material is new and complex, a

slower reading rate, because one missing link can spell confusion.)

5. A narrative or graphic example. (Usually this can be read more quickly and skimmed for main ideas.)

You could have your student or your student's teacher answer the following questions:

1. Is there a basic textbook for the course?
2. May the textbook be brought home for homework purposes?
3. May related materials be brought home if assignments are given in them and if so, is there a particular check-out system?
4. Will the reading materials assigned generally be used as a *preview* of material to be discussed in class in greater detail?
5. Will the reading materials assigned generally be used as a *review* of material already discussed in class in greater detail?
6. Will the reading materials cover separate information than that discussed in class? If so, how much importance will be placed on mastery of the material before examination?

Taking Note of Notetaking, Underlining, and Highlighting

Long and detailed chapters have been written on various systems of taking notes in class, from films, from guided tours, and from textbooks. Again, the teaching of such techniques properly belongs in the English curriculum at various grade levels. However, some basic information may be helpful for the home front. Most research shows that requiring involved notetaking before the student reaches grade six may result in weaker rather than stronger comprehension. If self taught systems are working well—do not change them. You may do more damage than good!

When notetaking is appropriate, here are some basic considerations:

1. Notes should follow some type of format. Have your student ask: Is this material organized around patterns of:

   a) Cause and Effect
   b) Rules/Definitions followed by examples
   c) Comparison
   d) Chronological order or listing
   e) Question and Answer
   f) Flow chart
   g) Description

   Match your note styles to these advance organizers.

2. In general, no attempt should be made to write or copy word for word unless a direct formula, definition, or quotation is being used.
3. Most research shows the more notes that are put "in the students' own words" (paraphrased), the more meaningful they will be for later review. One warning here—ask questions to be sure paraphrasing is accurate if you are uncertain.
4. Fewer notes are better than extensive pages because writing interferes with looking and listening.
5. Neatness is not important if the student can accurately read and interpret the notes a few days later.
6. Abbreviations invented by the student are better than a long list of memorized symbols and encourage some shortcuts in recording. One warning here—some students don't abbreviate well. Forcing the issue leads to mysteries when the notes are reviewed.
7. Hints of *minimum* notes to take would be:

   a) Information placed on the board.
   b) Underlined terms on overhead papers.
   c) Darkened, italicized, or boxed-off information.
   d) Repeated information on a topic. (For example, the teacher *said, wrote,* and then *gave an example.*)
8. Styles or formats vary, but several good systems use a divided paper such as those in Figure 20 with columns provided for class notes, main facts/key terms, questions that occur needing answers, and summaries.
9. Encourage the use of drawings, pictures, and flow charts as good visual aids and shortcuts for later understanding and memory.
10. Remember, this process takes practice in order to become a familiar tool. The reported minimum number of trials before "comfort" starts and "learning the tool" lessens is given as four sessions for most new strategies. Parent can help by asking to see trial efforts and praising improvement with each new "practice" session.
11. The use of underlines and highlights within school owned materials is forbidden, of course. In colleges and universities, most students purchase their own textbooks and these techniques become major tools. The same general guidelines given for outlining can be used for both underlining and highlighting. Time is saved because rewriting is not needed. Numbers and letters in the margins can be used to denote subtopic and details. A text that has been personally underlined will be easier to review prior to a test if the material was wisely selected for marking.

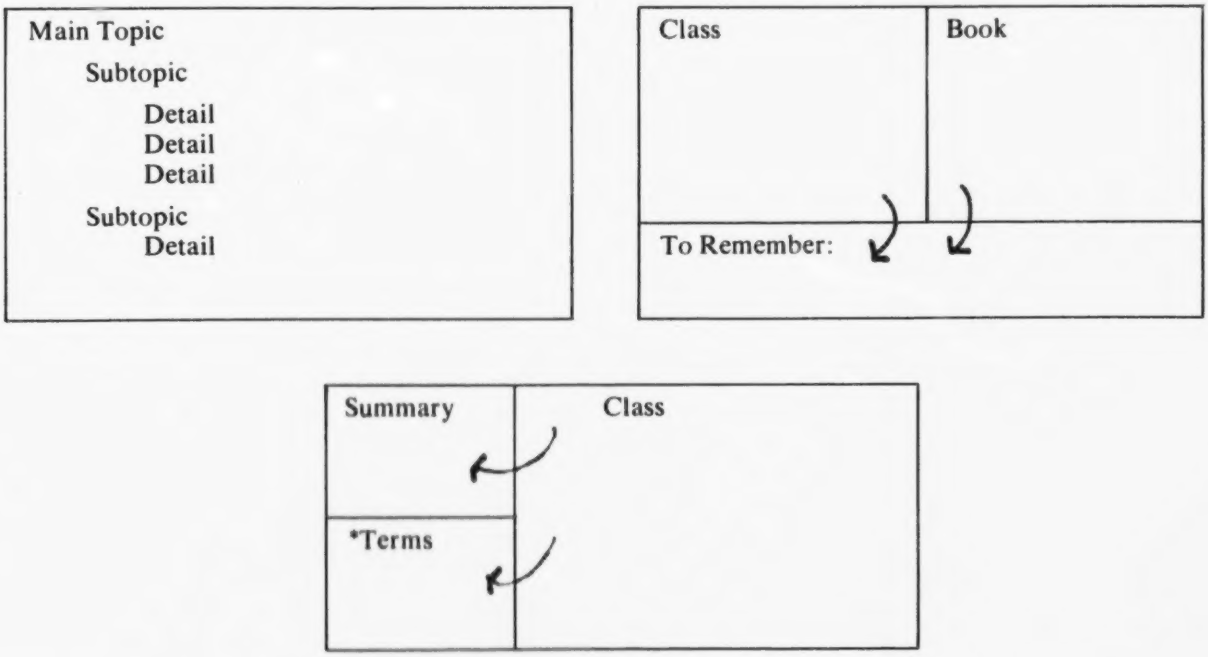
12. Finally, notes are most helpful when used for later review. Rework the notes in test preparation by using underlines, highlighting, color coding, and further summaries. (See the test taking—memory chapter for details.) The basic idea is to be able to recall the material needed. If the students notes presently permit this, that is great! If not, the problems probably have been listed above or the material is too difficult or is delivered too quickly. Another possibility for confusion may be a lack of previous exposure to the topic or coursework. Attempting to understand intricate facts about volcanoes without having been introduced to even one basic lecture on geology may well be impossible. (See the section on Dealing with Incorrect/Inadequate Work Due To Level or Pace Overload.)

Figure 20

Notetaking Formats

(Secondary)

Instructions: Explore each notetaking format separately by using any of those below for a period of at least one week. During review, emphasize the most important information by underlining or moving the items as indicated by the arrows. Give extra attention to emphasized information for test preparation.



Using Reference Sources

Detailed teaching of reference skills should come in the classroom, library, or laboratory. However, as a parent, you can do some checking upon your child's basic study skills in this area by asking the following types of questions concerning different parts of the textbook. If skills are lacking but required for the grade level, call your child's teacher or the school librarian and discuss some one-to-one guidance. In mastering every new reference skill, some practice will be needed to become at ease with the material. Allow at least four different trials on different days before expecting familiarity.

Review you child's currently used textbooks. (Not all books will have all of these parts.)

1. Table of Contents

   a) Where is it?
   b) Where is it in the book are you presently reading?
   c) Can you review where you were working last week/month?

   (The Table of Contents is in the front of the book with each section/unit/chapter heading usually indicating the major topic to be covered along with page numbers for each of these.)

2. Glossary

   a) Where is it?
   b) Do you ever use this section?
   c) Show me how you use it for one item in this week's work.

   (The Glossary is usually found in the back of the book and will contain an alphabetical list of terms with definitions used in the text. It is provided so that a reader has a "content specific" dictionary readily available. Many highly technical and specialized terms will not be found in a regular dictionary.)

3. Index

   a) Where is it?
   b) Is there a topic index?
   c) Is there an author's index?
   d) Look up one item from this week's reading.

   (The Index is usually found in the back of the book and will contain an alphabetical list of the subjects or topics covered in the text along with page numbers where the information is discussed. In some books, there are different indexes for subjects and authors, but all function in the same manner.)

4. References/Bibliography

   a) Where is this section in your book?
   b) How could you use this information?

   (References are usually found in alphabetical order in the back of the book by the authors' last name or other source of information such as project title.)

5. Footnotes

   a) Are they used in this book?
   b) Find an example of one and explain how it is used.

   (Footnotes are most often found at the bottom of the page with a matching small number placed in the main text which identifies each note providing additional information on a topic or a source for the information. In some cases, footnotes are all listed at the end of each chapter.)

Here are some other important reference sources of which your child should be aware:

1. Dictionary

   a) Do you use one in school and for what classes?
   b) Where do you find one in each classroom?

   (A Dictionary is an alphabetical listing of words with definitions along with a phonetic pronunciation guide and a breakdown into syllables.)

2. Thesaurus

   a) Do you use this when you write?
   b) Where do you find one at your school?

   (A Thesaurus is an alphabetical listing of words with suggestions for many other words which mean approximately the same thing. Its use helps avoid the overuse of the same word when writing compositions. Its use also helps you to build vocabulary skills.)

3. Author Card Index/Subject Card Index (in library)

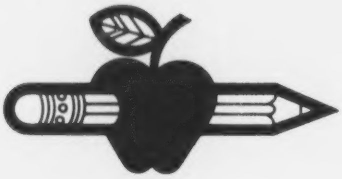
   a) Have you used this at your school?
   b) Explain to me how you would use it to find information about different breeds of dogs?
   c) What person could help you practice this at school?

   (Drawers contain alphabetized cards, either by authors' name or subject title. The cards provide book titles and brief descriptions of the books including number of pages and publisher.)

4. Journal of Periodic Literature (in library)

   (This is a constantly updated listing of names or topics covered in publications, magazines, or journals which are frequently issued: weekly, monthly, or quarterly. The sources range from newsstand journals to highly technical and specialized professional journals. Many high school students have been exposed to this aid by computers which are now frequently used to store such information.)

Chapter 5



Test Taking Competence and Confidence

Knowing How to Prepare Before the Test
Making Memory Strategies Usable
Comprehending During the Test
Learning by Review After the Test
Managing Test Anxiety

Parents:
How can you do so poorly on tests?

Students:
I can't remember that many different "things" for my test!

I don't do any better when I study for tests, so why bother?

I hate tests—I'm going to be sick that day.

I can do everything I need to do for the test the night before—I don't need any sleep.

Cramming is the answer—and a lot of coffee.

I never guess right about what's going to be on the stupid tests—where do those questions come from anyway—it's the pits?

I just went blank—honest—I knew the "stuff" yesterday.

Knowing How to Prepare *Before* the Test

No area of study skills causes greater anxiety for many students than preparing for major tests. Actually, if all other aspects of study skills are in working order, preparing for tests should not be so traumatic. It would be helpful to divide up the "work" of test taking into several time periods and "walk" through a typical test.

Well Before the Test

1. Be certain the student knows what will be covered on the test. For example:
   a) What textbook chapters?
   b) What lecture dates?
   c) What handout titles?
   d) What laboratory experiments?
   e) What terminology lists?

2. Be certain any "missing pieces" are replaced. (For example, borrow notes from another student that cover the day spent at the doctor's office.)
3. Ask your student to "guess" what important areas will be covered and then compare the "guess" to those of other successful students.
4. Ask your student to clarify to what extent certain types of material must be recalled, whether it is to be recalled exactly, in proper order, or paraphrased.

Day Before the Test

1. Be certain all remaining questions are answered by the teacher. The more meaningful the material, the easier it is to recall or memorize.
2. Allow adequate study time to review all material, perhaps making a final list of what is still unrecalled when trying to recite answers to questions.
3. Use a coding system to save time while reviewing notes so effort is given where most needed. An example of codes that might be used:

   * if item needs no further review
   ** if needs at least one more review
   *** if confusion as well as memory needs attention
4. Use clumping of information into sensible categories and then use color-coding and location for additional categorizing and visual clarity. An example might be to use three colors of highlighters for different "clumps" of information such as all dates in green, all names in blue, and all definitions in yellow. One can use color to denote a time line as well with all information from the 18th century in green, from the 19th century in blue, and the 20th century in yellow. One could also use only the upper half of pages for certain types of information and the lower half of pages for others to help build and reinforce units. The upper half could be used for information about all French explorers and the bottom half for information about Spanish explorers. Students could also use notebook paper for one category and note cards for another. If the information sounds similar and is easily confused, the memory of a name or term being on a specific type of paper or in a specific location can often give just enough additional information to make a more "educated" guess.
5. Employ a sensible memory strategy that is suitable for the material to be learned. (See the next section for some examples frequently used by middle school and older students.)

Making Memory Strategies Usable

Use of memory techniques should be limited, if possible, only to material fully understood. An improper study effort will be made if more work goes into rote memory than went into the original understanding of the material. Memory techniques can best be used on only two or three "chunks" of information per test so confusion between systems doesn't occur. Younger students could profit most from trying only one type of system on one "chunk" of information per test until the procedure becomes a familiar tool.

Most students have natural "favorites" in memory systems and these should be used when possible. If a technique seems awkward and confusing, don't use it! Oftentimes material can be studied with a particular system in mind and this saves time and speeds comprehension!

When trying a system for the first time, a parent should suggest topics that are easy and familiar to both parent and student. Two examples are presented in Figure 21 using some "everyday" material: a food list and a hobby list. After reviewing, choose a topic to prepare a practice system for your student and have a trial run!

Once the procedure is understood, *encourage a transfer to current homework materials* and an upcoming examination. Remember, limit the number of "chunked information categories" at first to three for high school students and one for upper elementary students.

Brief descriptions of six of the most commonly used memory strategies may be found below; several of these will be demonstrated in the two "everyday" examples. Use systems that are only as complex as needed and apply them to familiar information.

1. **Alphabet System**—each item of information is coded using the beginning letter of the term or phrase and then memorized in alphabetical order down a list. This system is good when several items must be remembered in a certain order. Sometimes the new acronym is pronounceable making it even easier, such as NATO and SETA.
2. **Number System**—can be applied to categories of items by memorizing a single number such as "643" and then using the numbers to recall there were 6 laws, 4 presidents, and 3 amendments to be recalled. Often the Number System is combined with the Alphabet System.
3. **Silly Sentence System**—is often used with the Alphabet System or the Number System to make a humorous statement. The first letter of each word in the sentence serves as a key back to the original material.
4. **Chaining**—is used to make a visual image (or "motion picture") in the imagination of a certain list of informa-

tion to be memorized in a certain order. These chains can be logical or humorous.

5. **Visualization**—is making a picture image to include many details of a scene, setting, or event, but not necessarily in any order. This technique is heavily built on in the use of filmstrips, movies, and videotapes in teaching materials. It helps to add enough fictitious details to give a "you were there" feeling, such as temperature, odor, and noises to enhance the vividness of the memory.
6. **Color-Coding and Background/Location**—were previously described in the section on preparing before the test. Briefly, the idea is to draw unusual attention to the items in order to establish more visual impressions to "hold on to." This is especially helpful if sets of information are confused. Pro and con arguments could be color-coded, cause and effect could be matched in colors, sources of material could be differentiated, such as sociology terms in pink and psychology terms in blue, for example. Massachusetts' products could be listed on graph paper, South Carolina's products on blue paper, and California's products on 3 x 5 index cards—all in order to build a "setting" for visual information.

Figure 21

Memory Systems

Food Format - Example One

Topic: "Food Eaten So Far Today" (using 11 items into "one chunk" with sequential order)

Random List	Alphabetical System	Silly Sentence System	Chaining System
pizza	**A**pple	(All)	(Sentence 1 to Sentence 2)
apple	**B**utter brickle	(Big)	
submarine sandwich	ice cream	(Children)	
cottage cheese	Carrot	(Chew)	
celery	**Celery**	(Cold)	
carrots	**Cereal**	(Cuts)	
butter brickle ice cream	Cottage cheese	(Currently)	
peanuts	Milk	(Many)	
milk	**P**eanuts	(Parents)	
Pepsi	**P**epsi	(Provide)	
cereal	**P**izza	(Polish)	
	Submarine sandwich	(Sausage)	

Numbers System

Note: 4 C items
3 P items
all other items are singular first letter

Comment: This is a maximum length and could better be used with fewer items. For younger children, most lists are no longer than 4 - 6 items.

Fishing Format - Example Two

Topic: "My Hobby (Fishing) Materials"
(using 10 items into "one chunk" with sequential order)

Random List	**Alphabetical System**	**Silly Sentence System**
Pole	**B**ait box	(Big)
Hook	**F**lies	(Fish)
Line	**H**ooks	(Have)
Bait box	**L**ine	(Long)
Reel	**M**innow	(Memories)
Sinker	**N**et	(Not)
Worms	**P**ole	(Pretty)
Minnows	**R**eel	(Red)
Flies	**S**inker	(Scaly)
Net	**W**orms	(Wrinkles)

Visual Chain System (comical)

The Bait Box tips over and spills out the Flies which fall into the Hook which is attached to the Line which soon tickles the Minnows sunbathing in the Net under the tree with the Pole standing against it arguing with the Reel over who let the Sinker drown diving for the Worms !

Visual Chain System (logical)

A person picks up the Pole in order to attach the Reel before threading on the Line down to where the Sinker is placed before adding the Hook . Then one opens the Bait Box and chooses from what is found when looking there: wiggly Worms , artificial Flies , and flopping Minnows . Soon the Net will be needed to bring in the first catch of the day.

Number System: no repeated first letter terms
Comment: This is a maximum length and could be better used with fewer items. For younger children most lists are no longer than 4-6 items.

Comprehending *During* the Test

1. If possible, leave time for one last quick review before the test. Do not try to add new material to the memory system at this point.
2. While taking the test, remember these rather "generic" tips for various test formats:

A. True-False

1. Read all parts of the statement carefully. Often the first part of the statement will be true, but portions following the comma will be false, therefore making the statement false.
2. False statements are generally easier to write and often times shorter.
3. Be very cautious about absolute words such as "always," "never," and "total." Rarely are such words included in true statements, because exceptions to most rules abound.

B. Matching

1. Cross out all "used" answers. But, remember you may want to make some changes.
2. Avoid confusion by always working from left to right, using your eyes to scan for more specific information.

C. Multiple Choice

1. Read the initial statement very carefully and fully before formulating a possible answer in your thoughts. Then begin to rule out choices until only one remains. If you scan before thinking about the answer, you may only become more confused.

D. Essay

1. Read all questions fully and carefully if a choice is offered. Choose questions you can handle for both quality of information and quantity of time in which to write the comments.
2. Always make a very brief outline/list of main points to be included before you begin writing.

E. General Comments Concerning All Formats:

1. Code items which you left unanswered or incomplete for ease in locating upon finishing a "first run" through the test. Often a circle around the item number is used. Use remaining time on these items only.
2. Remember that a first guess is usually a best guess. Do not make a change unless you recall better information.
3. Search for information in other answers/questions which might jog your memory for new recall.

4. Be aware of time limits and keep an appropriate pace going. If you are confused on one item, move rapidly to the next after a few seconds' thought. Attempt to set a general time plan. Forty items in 45 minutes means "about" 1 minute per item plus a quick proofreading review or 3 essay questions in 45 minutes means "about" 15 minutes per question.

Learning by Review *After* the Test

This is a vital step which is often ignored by students. When the test has been graded and returned, the following questions should be kept in mind:

1. Were the directions followed? If not, why not? Do I understand now what I should have done so I can/will do it next time?
2. Were items left out? If so, why? Did I use a coding system to help me identify those items left unanswered?
3. Did I use my time well?
4. When I guessed at answers, did I use my first and best guess? If I changed an answer, was it correct? Why did I change it?
5. Did I predict well what would be covered on the test for content? Did I predict well what would be covered on the test for sources? Did I predict well what would be covered by extent (word for word vs. general idea, for example)?
6. Given this same test again, what would I do differently in these areas:

   clustering of information
   memory strategy used
   amount of time allowed for study

Answers to these questions can be an excellent guidance tool for changes in preparing for the next test in this content area.

If the teacher does not routinely hand back tests for review, schedule a conference to collect this information privately, at least once, if test grades are consistently poorer than daily work results.

Managing Test Anxiety

Much has been written about "blocking," "freezing," and other such terms in a test session due to extreme nervousness, anxiety, or fear. Interestingly, most students who consistently prepare well for tests by following procedures already discussed in this unit have only minor problems along these lines.

When interviewed a day after the test, most students who reported "freezing" still did not have a grasp of the material and many later discovered or admitted they really didn't before the test.

There are some general suggestions that can add further confidence to test settings. These are listed below. Share and discuss them with your student.

1. Fatigue can take a heavy toll on memory and organizational systems. An adequate amount of sleep the night before a test can often be more beneficial than extra hours stolen from rest to study. Some research studies have shown evidence of memory strengthening by sleeping immediately after a thorough review of well organized material. Planning ahead should help avoid the need for very late hours.
2. A reasonable amount of food before a test is better than a large meal or no meal at all. Indeed, don't change personal patterns for test days.
3. A brief review the day of the test is good, but it only applies to previously organized material. Do *not* attempt to add new information at this point because it often interferes with material already rehearsed and memorized.
4. Avoid other students' conversations if the focus is on negative thoughts about the test, such as how difficult it will be, how long it will be, or how poor the grades will be.
5. Use self messages before sleeping and arising such as: "I can get through this test fine;" "I will just take it calmly and do the best I can;" "I am just as well prepared as I can be" and "Other students worry too, but we'll all be okay," for example.
6. Upon entering the testing room, take some deep breaths with your hands, arms, shoulders, and neck as relaxed as possible. If time allows, take a relaxation break at midpoint as well, but be certain not to look around at the work of others.
7. If you read a question and are confused, don't panic! Do you understand all but one term? Does that term mean something similar to what you studied, for example could the Concord Treaty be the Concord Agreement? If memory is not jogged, ask the teacher quietly if this may be the case. The worst that can happen is that the teacher will refuse to give an answer to your question.
8. When the test is over, proceed to put it out of your mind until it is returned for discussion. Avoid going over answers with other students and guessing what is correct. It often leads to becoming upset for hours over possibly nothing! Reward yourself for working hard and preparing as well as you could!

Chapter 6

Homework Quality

Eliminating "Messy" Papers
Proving the Value of Proofreading
Gaining Respect for Carefully Following Directions
Dealing with Incorrect or Inadequate Work Due to Concept or Pace Overload

Parents:
Your teacher mentioned that you need to give a "better effort" to your work—you do it, but most of it's poorly done.

Students:
The answer is right there—I can read it, why can't the teacher?

I did everything on the paper and still only go a D—that's unfair!

I'm totally lost! I gave up six weeks ago.

Eliminating "Messy" Papers

How can high quality work receive a poor grade? It is easy to answer this question after grading papers that are covered with dark eraser smears, are wrinkled, have words or lines run together, have left out portions arrowed in, or have additional pages dangling from a torn corner foldover. Beyond the second grade level, severe problems along these lines may indicate that the student has fine muscle coordination delay, but usually these problems can be immediately improved by allowing more time and more pride to enter into the picture. Here are some brief thoughts about "paperwork housekeeping."

Erasures are best made with a soft, clean eraser. An eraser can be cleaned by rubbing it on a piece of scrap paper. If repeated erasing is done in the same space, a hole may occur unless light pressure is used. Students should practice the pressure needed on a separate page for one trial and use only as much pressure as is needed for thorough removal. If your student writes with a very heavy dark stroke and needs to erase often, you may want to consider changing the pencil lead used from the usual No. 2 (requested by most schools) to a No. 3 lead. If both sides of the paper are being used, this becomes even more important, with final copy work perhaps submitted with one side use only. Eliminate eraser "crumbs" before rewriting or those particles can make the replacement bumpy and unreadable.

Word spacing is critical for legibility in writing. Recopying homework for 5-10 minutes daily for one week focusing just on this writing skill is often sufficient to yield improvement. Help scan your student's papers when finished and praise improvement. In general, the less controlled the handwriting, the more space is required for legibility.

Straight writing is enormously aided by using only lined paper. Younger students are usually trained on very wide lines and then gradually moved to standard notebook paper. If letter size control is also poor, then an every other line approach may be best. Lines can be darkened on the page to help a student with straightness. As mentioned above, recopying for this specific skill can bring attention to the problem and improvement.

Crossing out mistakes (if work is required to be in pen) should be done with a single line through the error rather than with a heavy darkening of the entire area. Heavy dark blotches also greatly detract from the reading of the material presented.

If needed, assignments should be folded to meet the teacher's requests. Often times lost work occurs if assignments are not properly folded/attached. Seldom is more than one vertical or horizontal fold acceptable. If your student simply stuffs papers in a bag or pocket, this will rarely be acceptable in most classrooms. Such rumpled papers stack poorly, fall easily to the floor, and are often lost.

Attaching additional pages to assignments should preferably be done by staple or paperclip, if no stapler is available. Efforts to tape pages or corner fold often do not hold securely once the papers are stacked. Even with numbers and the student's name on each page, work can be lost.

Labeling of papers needs to occur in order to guarantee understanding. The page number from the workbook, for example, could be used with the date and name for each effort. What is sadder than a solid effort with no credit given because the student doesn't recognize the proper date, purpose, or source of "those papers in the bottom of the locker?"

For beginning writers, some special techniques that may prove beneficial follow. Spacing, letter size, and placement on the line are stressed in Figure 22 where John is learning to write his name. Guidance is total on line one with copying required. However, by line four he will try to make the necessary strokes on his own. If certain letters of the alphabet or numbers are especially troublesome for your primary student, the same principle could be applied.

Another idea which uses a guidance approach for young students utilizes a stencil outline for elementary reading worksheets. The student's attention is guided to just one item at a time which limits attention to that area until the work is completed. Most reading program worksheets utilize 2 or 3 predictable patterns.

Figure 22

Guidance for Letter Writing

(Elementary)

Instructions: Have John trace name off pattern on line 1.
Have John trace over dots on line 2.
Have John try by himself on line 3.
Have John try by himself without a form on line 4.

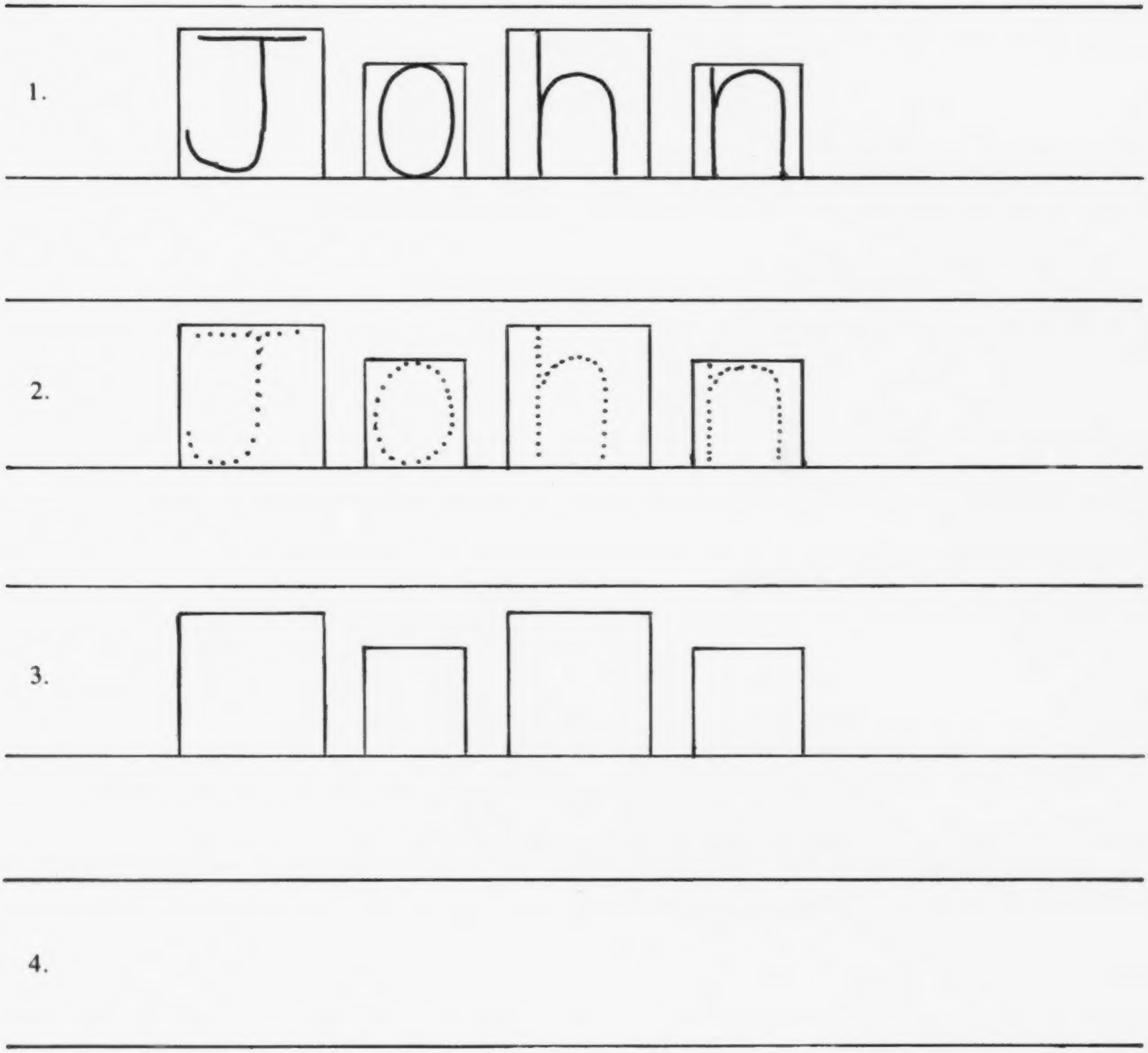
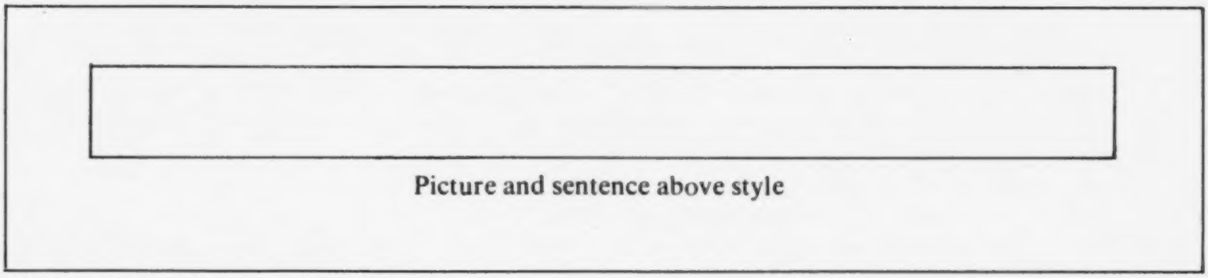


Figure 23

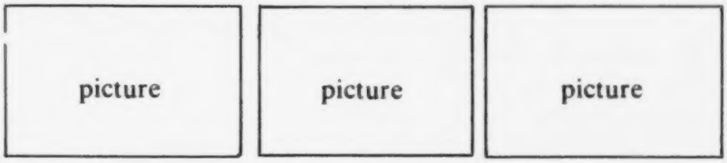
Reading Worksheet Stencils

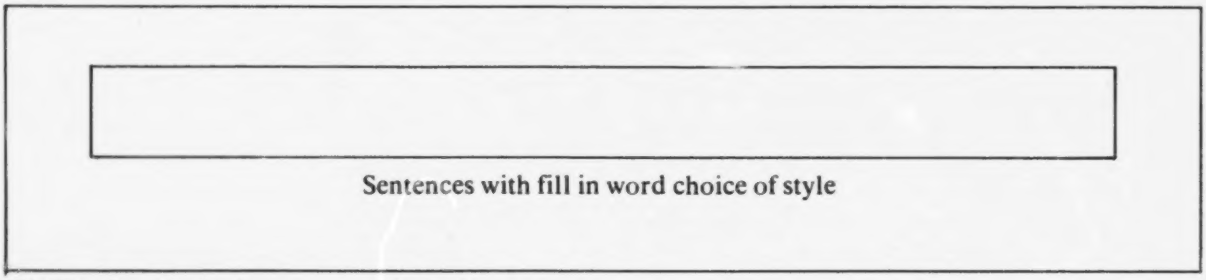
(Elementary)

Instructions: As a parent, look through your elementary child's workbooks and select 2 or 3 patterns. Trace the overall space needed for each item by laying a piece of thin paper over the area. Then cut an opening that size in the center of an 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inch sheet of black construction paper. Label each stencil indicating the type of format represented as in the examples below.

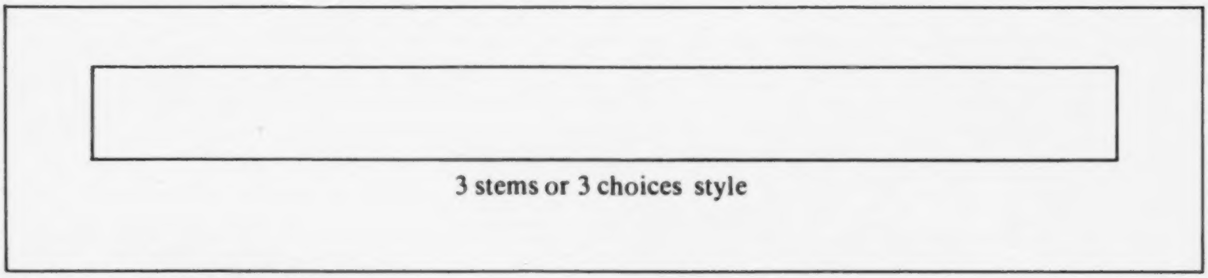

Picture and sentence above style

EX. The girls had seen a giraffe before.


picture
picture
picture


Sentences with fill in word choice of style

EX. The dog climbed up ______ the bed.
on down with


3 stems or 3 choices style

EX:	1. The rabbit got out	threw the rake in the street.
	2. Bob felt angry, so he	of the cage today.
	3. My mother dropped	six eggs on the floor.

Proving the Value of Proofreading

Ideally, all homework should be proofread before submission for grading. Obviously there are several levels at which proofreading can be done. Beginning from the most cursory to the more complex, a brief order is suggested:

1. Check to be certain all items have been answered.
2. Check to be certain all aspects of every item have been given attention.
3. Check for spelling errors.
4. Check for punctuation errors.
5. Check for adequate margins and spacing.

Most students find proofreading of long sections of materials to be tedious. Beginning in grades five or six, a page-by-page approach may be best. For students below fifth grade, breaking down a page to smaller sections may be helpful.

A "Do 4—Check 4" system has been used well on both math and writing papers by premarking the page with // marks every four problems or lines before beginning. The color red is ideal, if available, because red is associated with stop signs. These lines serve as reminders to return and look over work completed before proceeding. This technique has been incorporated in the plan for Greg shown in Figure 24 along with a graphic aid for charting his progress. In Figure 25 the technique is shown on a math work sheet.

Gaining Respect for Carefully Following Directions

A vital survival skill in our complicated society is knowing how to read and listen to directions and then to follow them successfully. If one is paying attention, one-step directions are usually no problem, even for young students. Several-step instructions are another matter for most of us, especially if the instructions are only given orally. A workable procedure for handling spoken instructions is to repeat, in order, what is to be done. The tasks should also be completed as soon as possible. If a delay or interruption will occur, write down key action and location words. For very young children, you might want to use a picture of the action word.

Check to make sure that your student is following directions on worksheets. It is important to listen well. Students should look at teachers when they are giving directions and look at the worksheets when instructions are offered. This is not the time to be talking to another student or getting organized in the classroom. You will help your child by discussing these issues on a personal basis. Use yourself as an example, if possible.

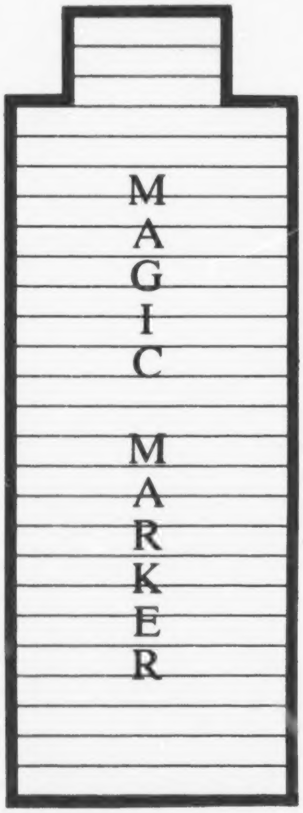
Figure 24

Do 4—Check 4 Progress Record

(Upper Elementary)

Instructions:

1. Ask Greg to recheck his work gradually on a "Do 4—Check 4" basis. Place // marks after every 4 items to remind him to go back and check for accuracy.
2. Place a small box and a line at the bottom of each worksheet. Explain to Greg that he is to put a check in the box after every item has been rechecked. When all of the boxes have been checked, he should sign his name and hand the work in to his teacher.
3. Greg may earn a slot on his "magic marker" sheet for A) each worksheet completed without grumbling or excuses, and B) complying with teacher requests or instructions without complaint.
4. A total of 24 slots will earn a magic marker. He will choose which color he wants to earn and use this color to darken the slots on his chart.
5. A "Star Wars" Folder will hold his tally sheets and remaining markers. Careful work will result in a marker earned approximately every three days.
6. Greg's teacher will control tally sheets, markers, and folder.



Starting Date ______________________ Color Chosen ______________________

Ending Date ______________________

Figure 25

Multiplication Practice

Instructions: Recheck your work gradually on a "Do 4—Check 4" basis. After every 4 items, go back and check for accuracy.

1.	32 x 5	25 x 3	371 x 6	591 x 3	//	☐
2.	21 x 14	48 x 22	35 x 11	59 x 45	//	☐
3.	142 x 31	376 x 31	653 x 70	679 x 81	//	☐

________________________ All work checked ☐

Student's signature

Figure 26 contains some ideas for helping your child to better understand how to use directions on an elementary reading worksheet. On the top part of the page there are three different actions required from the student. Using a colored pencil, help your student underline the action words by asking: "What do you actually have to do? What procedure do you need to carry out in order to successfully complete this work on the top of the page?" We have italicized the word "read," the words "use underlining," and a third set of instructions about "using underlining." To better help your student understand that those are three separate processes, let us number those 1, 2, and 3.

As each one is completed, have your student cross off those numbers. Many times elementary students earn poor grades because they only did half of what was required. Moving to the bottom part of Figure 21, there are four different actions the student must do. The student is to read, to select, to write, and then to write a second kind of task. Here the student must do four different procedures with that same content! We realize by the time we arrive at the bottom of this page, *seven* separate thinking and procedural processes are needed to work on this *one* page assignment. In Figure 27 this coding system has been applied to a worksheet for a secondary student.

Figure 26

Identifying Noun-Verb Patterns in Sentences

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: 1. *Read* each of the following sentences. Then, 2. *use underlining* and the symbol "N" to identify the noun phrase. 3. *Use underlining* and the symbol "V" to locate the verb phrase. The first sentence is done as an example.

1. Sally Johnson cried.
2. John hammered and sawed.
3. Her mother had laughed.
4. The clown fell down.
5. Miss Jones had been singing.
6. My doctor called.
7. The bridge was being built.
8. A large music festival was planned.
9. She left.
10. Peter Johnson died.

Instructions: Each of the sentences below uses the noun-verb pattern. As you 1. *read* each sentence, 2. *select* which words are included in the noun phrase and which words are included in the verb phrase. Then, 3. *write* the complete noun phrase after the symbol N on the line below the numbered sentence. Finally, 4. *write* the complete verb phrase on the line after the symbol V. The first sentence is done as an example.

1. Tom Hanson was pounding and sawing.
   N Tom Hanson ____ V was pounding and sawing. ____
2. A bookshelf had been built.
   N ______________ V ______________
3. Bill Jones and his father helped.
   N ______________ V ______________
4. The shelf was placed in the school.
   N ______________ V ______________
5. Everyone was pleased.
   N ______________ V ______________
6. The teacher wrote a letter of thanks.
   N ______________ V ______________

Figure 27
Recognizing Paragraph Topics

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: 1. Read each of the following sentences. Then 2. use underlining and the symbol "N" to identify the noun phrase. 3. Use underlining and the symbol "V" to locate the verb phrase. The first sentence is done as an example.

1. Green plants contain chlorophyll which is the pigment that creates the color of green. Through chlorophyll, a process occurs whereby plants are able to use the energy of the sun's rays to make compounds full of energy such as glucose. The process in which this transformation occurs is called "photosynthesis." All green plants are able to utilize this process of turning sun into energy and, from the greatest to the smallest, the processes are basically the same.

Topic ______________________________

2. Those interested in the study of crime compile rates for several crime categories by various cycles such as holiday, seasonal, and monthly. There is some evidence from the data collected to suggest that crimes against persons tend to escalate during warmer months. Colder weather months tend to show a rise in crime rates against property. Even across cultures and continents, these trends seem to be verified. Therefore, warm weather should generate greater personal protection and cold weather should generate greater property protection.

Topic ______________________________

Another example of how directions can be quite complicated is when it is never said to the student, but implied, that the sample at the top of the page serves as the only directions for how to complete the items. This is critical, but not obvious, for the student to realize. When looking at such a page, it is important to study the section arrowed or boxed in. Only after having finished that, the student should say: "What is it I am supposed to be doing on this worksheet?" Then the student is ready to move down the page and try the first two or three items before going back and checking. "Is my work matching the work that was presented in the sample above?"

Just for a moment, let us assume that your daughter reaches this point and she is not positive that she is understanding. She is not certain that she is doing what she is supposed to be doing. The clue then would be, "Do not leave the classroom until you have checked with your teacher." Show your teacher and say, "This is what I think I am supposed to be doing. Is this correct?" Nothing is more frustrating for a parent and a child than for the child to come home and say, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do on this worksheet. I didn't understand it, even when the teacher gave it to me." At 9 o'clock at night, there is no way that this confusion can be easily resolved. Questions can best be answered by the person whose responsibility it is to teach your child, and that is the teacher.

Teachers are the ones who should interpret the directions and give samples to your children. Your job is to make sure that your students are giving a good effort and are fully utilizing the teachers help.

On the following two pages you will see various checklist systems used to reinforce the following of directions in an orderly manner. The first (Figure 28) is an example for reading worksheets in which the student and teacher/parent rate the effort. Figure 30 is a math reminder that was originally designed to be taped on a desk corner when math worksheets were attempted. With such "reminder materials" done in sizes of 1/2, 1/3, or 1/4 page, it is easy to make a "master copy" featuring two or three days per page and to then photocopy and cut apart for daily use. Carbon paper can also be used to turn one sheet with four items into four progress checklists in the same amount of time.

Figure 28

Reading Tab

(Upper Elementary)

Name MARY **Date** 11-3-86

Instructions: The teacher will place a "+" if the student is doing the behavior (yes) and a "0" if the student is not doing the behavior. The student will do a self-rating using the same system at the same time.

+ means yes 0 means no	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
1. Read directions carefully before asking for help.	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+	+
2. Circled action words and numbered them.	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
3. Crossed out directions once completed.	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	+
4. Asked for help only after trying on own.	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+

Figure 29

Reading Tab
(Upper Elementary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The teacher will place a "+" if the student is doing the behavior (yes) and a "0" if the student is not doing the behavior. The student will do a self-rating using the same system at the same time.

+ means yes 0 means no	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
1. Read directions carefully before asking for help.										
2. Circled action words and numbered them.										
3. Crossed out directions once completed.										
4. Asked for help only after trying on own.										

Figure 30

Math Tab

(Upper Elementary)

Name BECKY **Date** 9-25-86

Instructions: Either the teacher or the student will place a "check" in the box if the behavior was used. Agreement should be made as to who will do the rating before beginning the task.

☑ Make a box around the instructions.
☑ Circle the first problem for an example.
☑ Try to do the first problem for each box.
☑ Have teacher(s) check your answers.
☐ Ask questions.
☐ Finish paper with "Do 4—Check 4" system.

Figure 31

Math Tab

(Upper Elementary)

Name ________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: Either the teacher or the student will place a "check" in the box if the behavior was used. Agreement should be made as to who will do the rating before beginning the task.

☐ Make a box around the instructions.
☐ Circle the first problem for an example.
☐ Try to do the first problem for each box.
☐ Have teacher(s) check your answers.
☐ Ask questions.
☐ Finish paper with "Do 4—Check 4" system.

In some classrooms, teachers have found "procedure tabs" to be so helpful that they laminate sets and then then allow students to use grease pencils to write on them for repeated use. Cleaning is accomplished by using a damp cloth. If you do not have a way of laminating your "procedure tabs," you might cover them with a clear form of contact paper. Varying the color of the paper might be considered—such as blue for math, green for reading, and yellow for spelling.

Dealing with Incorrect/Inadequate Work Due to Level or Pace Overload

If your student's work quality does not improve in spite of genuine effort over a period of several days to weeks, it is time to request a conference with the school counselor, the teachers in failure or near failure areas, and perhaps the school psychologist. In some cases, a poor "match" or "placement" has been made in curriculum material, class section level choice, style/speed of delivery, or lack of preceding coursework exposure. When this occurs, frustration and loss of self esteem can build rapidly. With many students, moving frequently from one school district to another (often at great distance and with differences in school system quality), this happens more than one would suspect. If both teacher and student have given full effort with poor results, some of the following actions may need to be considered:

1. Request an evaluation of present student achievement levels, expected levels in the current class, student potential, and related emotional, behavioral, health, or social factors which may need to be incorporated into an academic plan. In some cases, special education services may be needed. An educational specialist, such as a school psychologist, counselor, educational strategist, or educational consultant, may be available within your district at no personal expense to you. Contact your child's guidance counselor or the local school administrator.
2. Leave the child in the class/section, but remove all pressure for "good grades," perhaps settling for a D with the understanding that the student may learn more in this section (through discussion) than one would in a "lower section" where a better grade could be earned. Loss of status among friends due to a move may weigh heavily in this decision. A level change at semester break or year end needs to be seriously investigated in such cases.
3. Leave the child in the class/section and hire a tutor to supplement and review classroom instruction (often a choice for high school level coursework). Some schools have trained peer tutors (specially trained students) to help at no cost.

4. Move the student to a less demanding section level of the course, for example, from Advanced Geometry to Geometry, where the pace should be slower and more in-class practice provided.
5. Remove the student from the class entirely and replace the time slot with more in-school study time such as a study hall. Even though this will normally result in the loss of a "credit," the relief may be worth it and the time used to bolster other subject area results.

Chapter 7

"Everyday" Assignments

Visualizing Goals and Progress
Specifying Behavior By Goal, Time, or Task
Looking at Long-range Planning

Parents:
Why haven't you started your homework yet?

Students:
I can't stand these worksheets anymore! IF I see one more, I'll get sick... honest!

Oh! Do I have to practice my violin lesson tonight? I did it last night.

I still can't do these darn math problems and we've already done six pages of them this week.

Visualizing Goals and Progress

Even well motivated students lack enthusiasm for doing one more vocabulary list, one more number fact review, or one more practice session. This often breeds poor effort and causes teachers to believe that the students have not mastered the concepts and operations even though they clearly have. An "error analysis" could reveal that the students are only making careless errors at random and that they do understand the concepts.

You may want to suggest an occasional change of pace to break the tedium of such homework. If a large amount of repetitive work is assigned, however, it may be "busywork" and a conference with the teacher is recommended. Here are some different approaches to studying which have merit:

1. Study with a friend.
2. Work with the addition of something rewarding to accompany the task such as music or a snack.
3. Start rote practice drills or pages at a different point than at the beginning and work backwards or from the middle out, if neat, organized completion is still possible.
4. Use a new format: index cards instead of paper, colored pencils, and so forth.
5. Choose a different time to study, such as just before some rewarding activity. Vary your time time allotment for tasks by setting a timer for ten minutes per effort over three periods. Treat yourself to a brief relaxation period (of one song on the radio for example) between periods. Another time allotment change would be to do the study task and some other task in alternation, such as writing definitions for thirty vocabulary words, five at a sitting and then doing five minutes of household chores, until both "unexciting jobs" are completed.
6. Make a "game" of the work by competing with yourself for new speed (keeping quality adequate, of course) or make a chart of progress in accuracy, over a month period. Make a graphic "tower of power" of new facts or words.

In the "Visit to the Zoo" in Figure 32, a young student was allowed to choose an animal goal each day. An animal sticker was cut into four pieces and 1/4 of an animal was given for each "Zoo Visiting Rule" obeyed. The tail was awarded first and the head last. Five animals were available to fill the cages. One family had three young students on "zoo trips," all were highlighting study goals appropriate for first and second graders. The teacher liked the plan so much she placed an entire elementary reading group on it and sent a letter explaining the program to the parents.

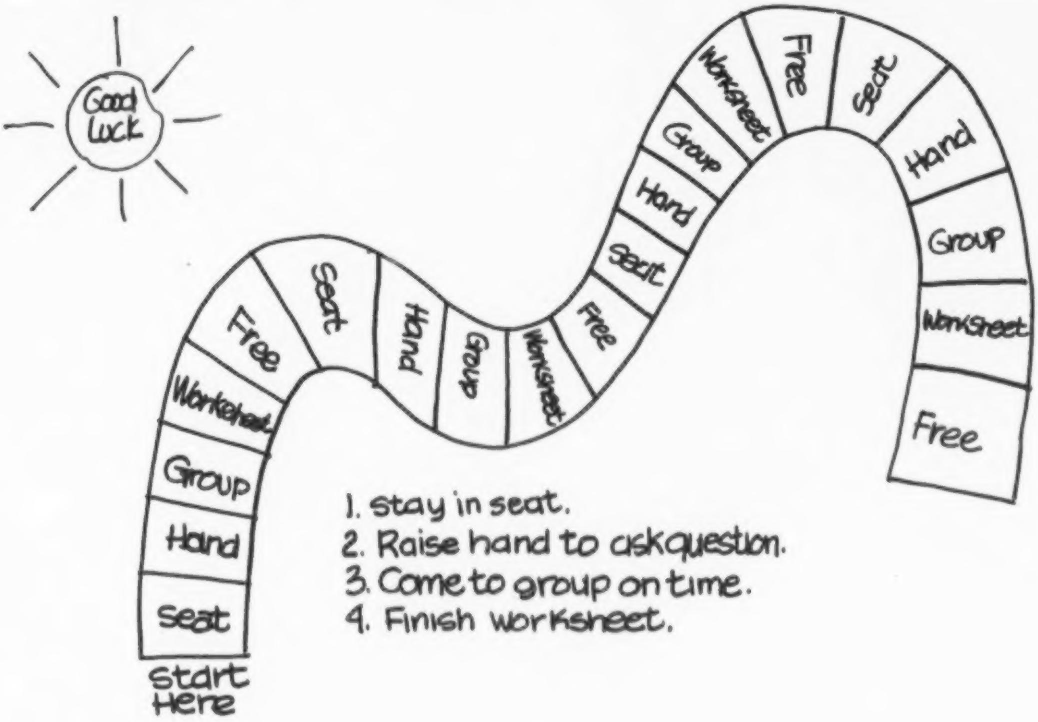
Figure 32

Visit the Zoo

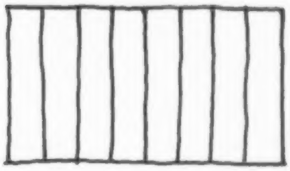
(Elementary)

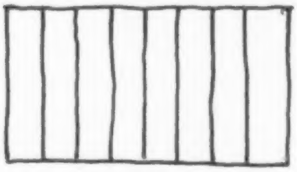
Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

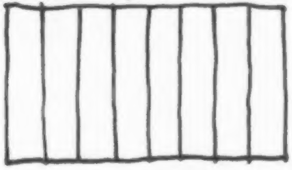
Instructions: Each week the teacher will allow the student to color each square on the sidewalk where an appropriate behavior was shown. Cut animal stickers into four pieces. Award 1/4 of an animal sticker for each "x" received *following* reading practice. Glue the stickers to the cages to make complete animals for the zoo.

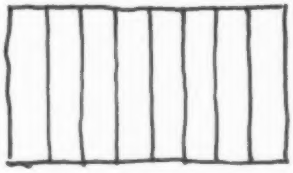

Good Luck
Start Here
Seat
Hand
Group
Worksheet
Free
Seat
Hand
Group
Worksheet
Free
Seat
Hand
Group
Worksheet
Free
Seat
Hand
Group
Worksheet
Free

1. stay in seat.
2. Raise hand to askquestion.
3. Come to group on time.
4. Finish worksheet.









Dear Parents:

We're trying a new approach in the classroom to help motivate the children to complete their work and to follow daily rules. Each day the students will color in a sidewalk (block by block) if credit is earned. There are "free" squares to help the pace along plus a "surprise" square which results in a special treat or activity for the whole class.

Three children are presently taking these "trips" each day. If your child brings home a fully colored sidewalk, you will know we all had a very good day. If most of the sidewalk was colored, it means we had a reasonably good day. If many squares are still uncolored, it means there was difficulty in managing time wisely.

The stickers at the end of the road each day are related to the trip. Zoo animals are used for a "trip to the zoo" and farm animals for a "trip to the farm." Your support and encouragement will help our school efforts. We welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

Jane White, teacher

Joan Kuepper, school psychologist

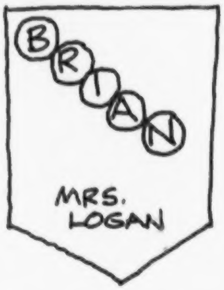
Another visual aid approach for a very young student was used with a kindergarten boy who had been retained. He was given a blank badge each morning (see Figure 33) and then he was awarded a small sticker with a letter on it when he completed his paperwork in each class. If he had worked successfully all day, the stickers would allow him to spell his name on the badge. The total learning time involved was five twenty-minute sessions per day. Recesses, snack times, activity periods, and story times did not require charting. This technique was so successful that it was later used with a second grade boy. The letter that was given to Brian's teachers and parent is presented in Figure 33.

Figure 33
Badge Charting
(Elementary)

To: Teachers of Brian & Mrs.Logan
From: Joan Kuepper
Re: Behavior system to begin on January 25th
(The teacher has all materials in her mailbox now)

At a recent staffing, we promised to begin a behavior monitoring system for Brian. We needed something with simple goals and a way to have the system apply across various teachers. We will try the following:

1. Brian will receive a "badge" each morning from his teacher.
2. He will earn one letter of his name for each time period he meets his two goals:
   (a) I will try to do my work the first time I am asked to do it.
   (b) I will keep my hands to myself and on my own materials.
3. Time periods will be as follows:
   (Mrs. _____ gives) Beginning of day to morning recess.
   Morning recess to noon lunch.
   Noon lunch and noon recess.
   (Mrs. _____ gives) Beginning of afternoon to recess.
   Afternoon recess to close of day.
4. Mrs. Logan will sign each badge if Brian complies with the behavioral goals at home. She will repin the badge the next morning and the teacher will remove and file it. She will then pin today's badge on each morning.
5. Brian can earn six "credits" per day (all five letters and mother's initials) and at least four out of six will be required for a car model part.



A pictogram approach that could be color-coded is shown in Figure 34. It is designed to point out a dramatic difference between meeting and not meeting the goals as identified in words, colors, and pictures. Sally charted her own progress under teacher supervision and then delivered the chart to her parents each week. They followed up with a Monday telephone conference with the teacher in order to obtain further details if needed.

Specifying Behavior by Goal, Time, or Task

Another method of charting is to separate each individual goal into its own box. Use a single sheet in order to compare categories with ease. Here are the pictogram categories done in a more business like, grown up system that gives the same information, but without the pictures or color codings (see Figure 35).

82

Figure 34
Pictogram Chart of Sally's Progress
(Elementary)

Instructions: Using a separate color for each task, color code the goal statement and drawing with the dots at the bottom of the chart. Draw a column each day for each task to the "no" line if the behavior was not shown. Draw a column to the "yes" line if the behavior was shown.

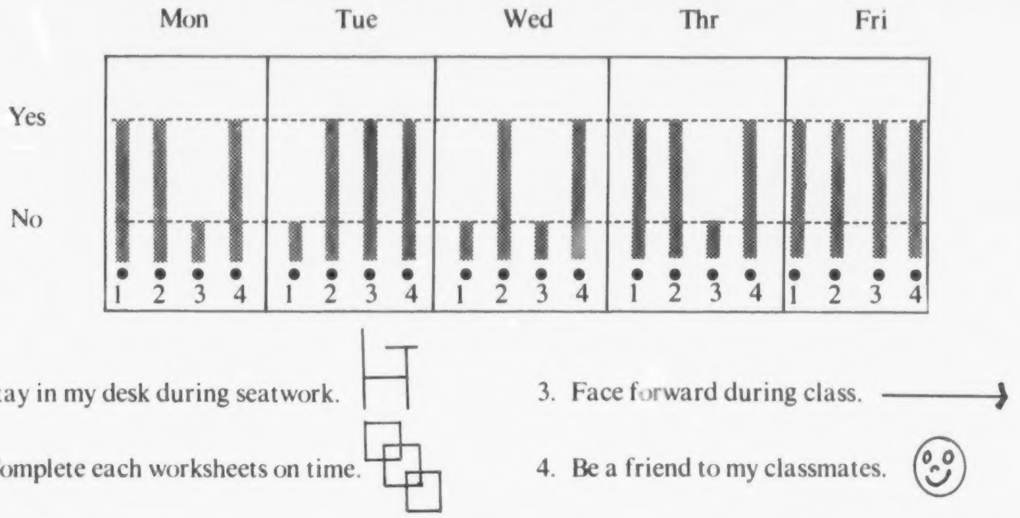


Figure 35
Charting by Individual Goals
(Upper Elementary)

Name SALLY **Dates Covered** MAR 7-14

Instructions: Place an "X" in the *yes* box if behavior was shown and place an "X" in the *no* box if behavior was not shown. If the student is self-rating, have a person verify accuracy by signing the witness line each day.

Stay in my desk during seat work

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Yes	X			X	X
No		X	X		

Complete each worksheet on time

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
No					

Face forward during class

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Yes		X			X
No	X		X	X	

Be a friend to my classmates

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
No					

Witnesses ______________ Mon
______________ Tues
______________ Wed
______________ Thurs
______________ Fri

The following system (Figure 36) was used with a seventh grade student which covered middle school daily progress in an adult format. The letter was the result of a teacher/parent conference when all participants agreed to become involved in helping Joseph. On the progress report, you will note that both Joseph and his teachers gave a yes or no rating for each time period. If a classroom activity was occurring where the goal was not applicable, an "X" was placed in the box and "credit" was considered given (such as a class field trip day when there was no paperwork to do, for example).

Figure 36

Joseph's Time Period Progress Report

(Secondary)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smyth:

Will you please take a few minutes each evening to review Joseph's daily record and then write questions or comments? Please feel free to call if questions arise.

Because it is extremely important that Joseph improve his listening and organizational skills and responsibility, we ask that he:

1. Bring his progress report home each evening.
2. Discuss it with you.
3. Bring it back each morning to his teacher and get a new one to start another day.

Thank you!

Instructions: Both student and teacher rate yes (Y) or no (N) for behavior each time period.

	8:30	9:15	10:00	10:15	11:45	12:45	1:30	2:00	2:15	3:00	3:30
1. Joseph had his materials ready to begin	J-Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	X	Y	Y
	T-Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N		N	Y
2. Joseph watched the teacher when she was giving directions.	J-N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	T-N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
3. Joseph's work could be read.	J-Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	N	Y	Y	Y	N
	T-Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		N	N	Y	Y	N
4. Joseph completed his work on time.	J Y	X	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
	T Y		N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
5. Joseph got out of his seat only with permission from teacher.	J Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
	T Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y

Teacher Total (yes) 38 (INCLUDING X)
Joseph Total (yes) 45 (INCLUDING X)

Comments: PLEASE CALL ME TOMORROW AT WORK. THANKS.

Parents, please sign: Mr Smith
Date SEPT. 22

Figure 37

School Week Task Checkoff

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: List assignments under the task column and place an "X" in the column for the day the work is to be completed. Circle the "X" when the work is done.

Task	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday

A chart can be made to cover any length of time that is deemed appropriate. Unlike contracts, charts can cover longer periods of time. A blank form is provided for your efforts in Figure 37. Simply fill in the tasks to be done and then use a check-off system in order to monitor how much progress is being made.

Looking at Long-range Planning

For the older child who finds charting rewarding, in Figure 39 you may create a month at a glance system by using the following approach: Use the lowest four rows of scores for a daily report per week. There is room for recording five different goals per day. A daily total score can be recorded if you wish. In our example (Figure 38), the symbol "+" was used for success. The number of "+" marks per day were transferred to the bottom line. By the close of the school week, a total of weekly "+" marks can also be recorded.

Above the four rows for daily recording, you will find a summary row for the Month by the Day. This "+" number would come from the total underneath each daily box.

Above the four rows for *Month by the Day*, there is a single box for *Month by the Week*. This number comes from the total at the end of each of the four weekly rows.

Remember that in areas of practice that require daily drill, a longer charting experience can often show more encouraging results than a daily or even weekly approach. To see the number of errors decreasing or the number of correct responses increasing is great. Either approach can be used by labeling the boxes as needed.

There is a wide variety of planning and monitoring choices depending upon your child's ability level, attention span, degree of motivation, and how much feedback is needed to improve performance. Figure 40 is a simple page that could apply to just one day at a time. You circle the letter representing the day on which you are focusing. The time of the day, what is to be studied in those time slots, how it is to be studied, and where it is to be studied are all included. Either parent initials as to whether it was completed or not.

In the example, Spanish vocabulary was to be studied from 7:00 to 7:30 with a book and index cards in the den at the home. It is initialed as it was completed as previously agreed. Another line states that "woodshop safety book" was to be completed with book and tablet containing notes. Where? It was to be done in the bedroom. How? The agreement was made to have music on. It was done, Dad says so, since it was checked off. From 8:00 to 9:00 an art project was to be worked on. The student needed paints and a sketch pad. It was to be done at the kitchen table. It was done. Continuing on we find that something was not done. Who said so? Dad said so. It was to be a review of science, by telephone with a classmate by questioning. It was to be done on the kitchen phone. For some reason that did not happen. It will have to be rescheduled if it is not completed at school the next day.

If your child is doing better and you like this format, you can use colored pencils to color-code each day and then use it all week. You could write Monday in red, Tuesday in blue, for example. However, it may become a bit crowded.

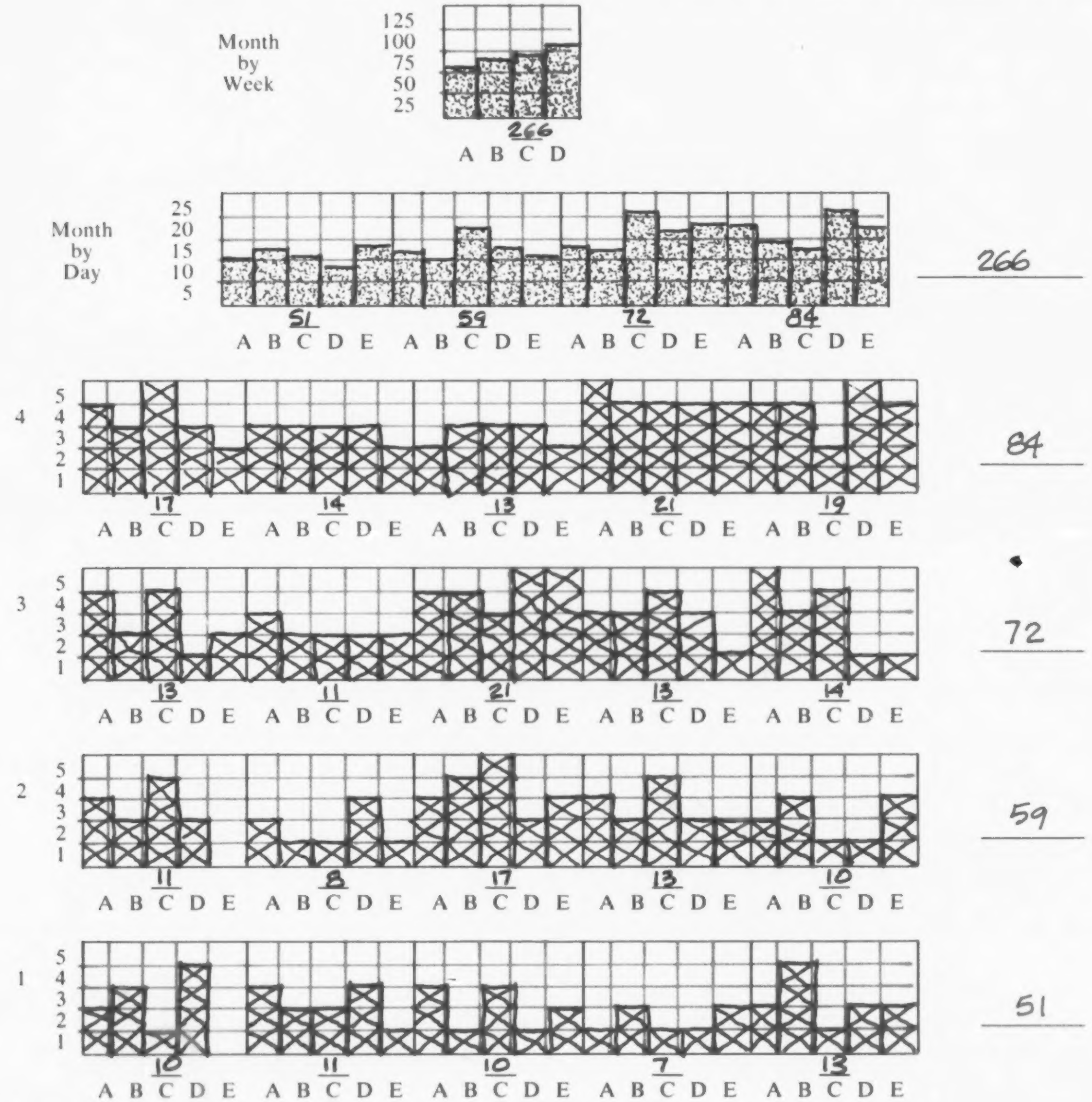
Figure 38

Cumulative Chart by Month

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: Begin by designating up to five goals by letter on a separate page. Each letter represents a specific goal. Record on a graph paper format the appropriate height of the X's if the behavior is shown (more X's indicate higher quality—see scale below). Leave a blank if the behavior is not shown to any degree. Progress may be tallied and recorded as one number for the overall day if desired. Apply the system to a week or a month as desired.



Scale:
5x excellent
4x good
3x average
2x below average
1x poor

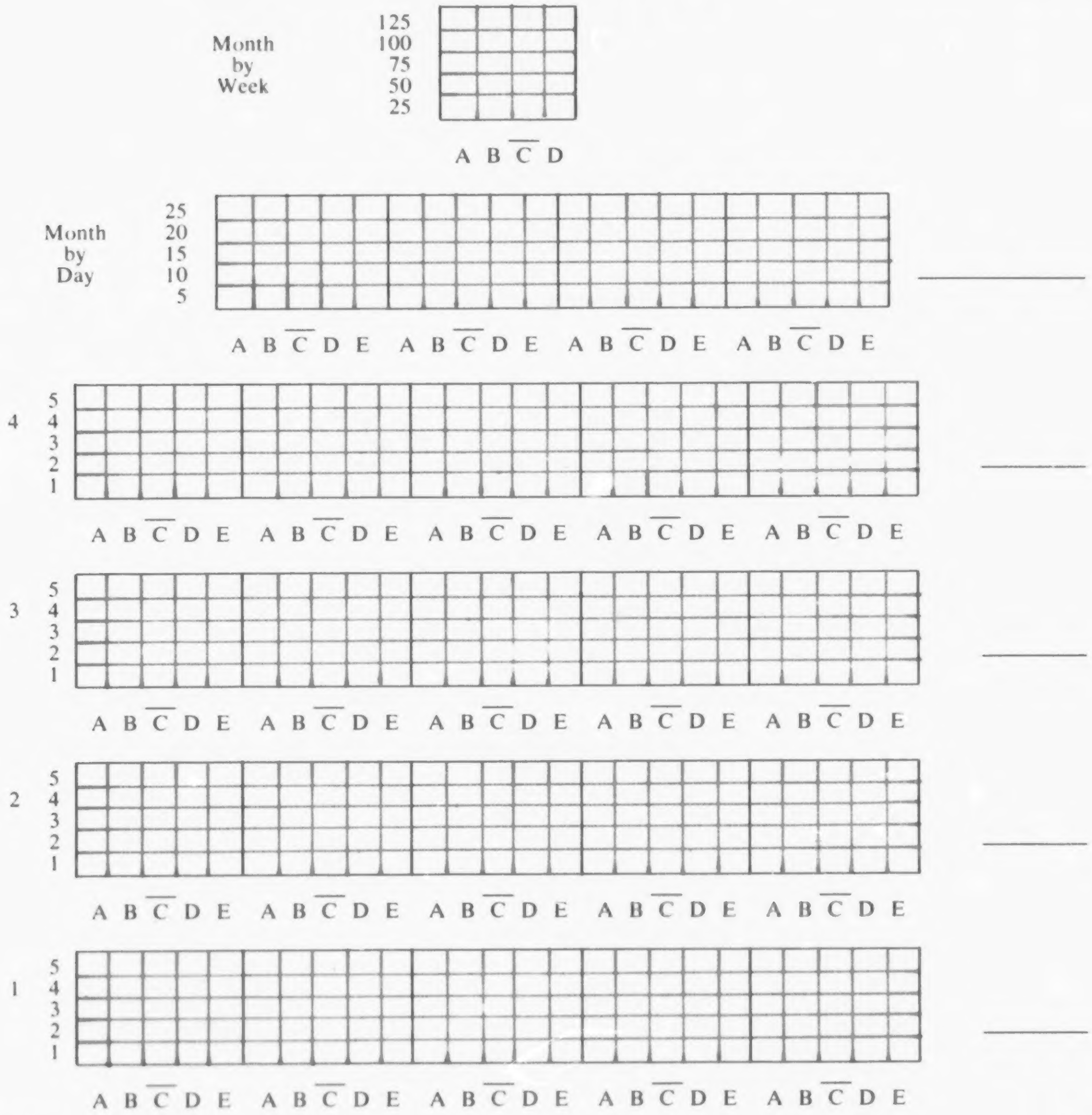
Figure 39

Cumulative Chart by Month

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: Begin by designating up to five goals by letter on a separate page. Each letter represents a specific goal. Record on a graph paper format the appropriate height of the X's if the behavior is shown (more X's indicate higher quality—see scale below). Leave a blank if the behavior is not shown to any degree. Progress may be tallied and recorded as one number for the overall day if desired. Apply the system to a week or a month as desired.



Scale:
5x excellent
4x good
3x average
2x below average
1x poor

Figure 40

Comprehensive Study Plan by Day

(Secondary)

Name BILL **Date** APRIL 6

Instructions: The student records details under designated what, how, and where headings with parent help and agreement. The parent initials for the work completed under the specific heading. Complete the form one day early to use as a *plan* or complete the form at the close of the day to use as a *monitor* sheet.

Circle Day Studying Done:

[✓ M] T W T F S S

Time	What?	How?	Where?	Completed
7-8 A.M.	SPANISH VOCABULARY	BOOK AND INDEX CARDS	DEN	✓ Mom J.K.
3-4 P.M.				
5-6 P.M.				
7-8 P.M.	WOODSHOP SAFETY BOOK	BOOK AND TABLET FOR NOTES	BEDROOM WITH MUSIC ON	✓ DAD B.K.
8-9 P.M.	ART PROJECT	PAINT AND SKETCH BOOK	KITCHEN TABLE	✓ DAD B.K.
9-10 P.M.	REVIEW SCIENCE		KITCHEN PHONE	No

Figure 41

Comprehensive Study Plan by Day

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student records details under designated what, how, and where headings with parent help and agreement. The parent initials for the work completed under the specific heading. Complete the form one day early to use as a *plan* or complete the form at the close of the day to use as a *monitor* sheet.

Circle Day Studying Done:

M T W T F S S

Time	What?	How?	Where?	Completed
7-8 A.M.				
3-4 P.M.				
5-6 P.M.				
7-8 P.M.				
8-9 P.M.				
9-10 P.M.				

A bit different from the preceding plan is to look at a whole week through the use of a time log. Many students have carried these kinds of devices for approximately a week so that they can look at the pattern of how they are using their time. You can block off the school week as in Figure 42. Basically you will be looking at out-of-school time with your students. If a student has a study hall, "S.H." has been used to indicate that study hall time could be used. In this case, the student has planned to work on English at 7:00 o'clock on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday and on math on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 o'clock, if there is any work. There will be certain subject areas for your student where there may consistently be no homework. It is assumed that work for those subjects must be completed in class or they finish it in study hall. A check with teachers as to the accuracy of this assumption is wise unless grades are indicating strong results.

Depending upon how severe you perceive the problem to be, the following example (Figure 44) may also function as a contract. The interesting thing about this format is that both parties initial for each other. This is helpful when dealing with a defiant or nontrusting child. The supervisor initials indicating, "Yes, you did the task, I'll sign for that," and the student initials, "Yes, you did reward me and I'll sign to it."

This complex format is used frequently in institutional settings. It is an approach that is effective for children who have had chronic disappointment. Sometimes there are valid reasons for parents not to keep promises. However, if you find yourself regularly saying, "I know I promised something and I haven't done it yet, but I am going to make it up to you," you are setting your child up for even more dismay. If you are asking your children for more consistency than you are giving them, you are risking bitterness and hypocrisy.

Scott agreed to the following "jobs" on the days indicated: practice the trumpet for thirty minutes for three days of the week; redraw the biology laboratory sketches over two days; type the English paper on Saturday; and telephone (depending upon when other party could be reached) for a newspaper interview on either Saturday or Sunday.

As shown, he completed all jobs except the trumpet practice session on Friday. We know this because his father, Robert Thompson, has initialed for Scott's work.

Mr. Thompson has followed through on all of his pay-offs as shown by Scott's initials on that side of the chart/contract. These included money, use of equipment, transportation and a snack. If all went as noted, we assume Scott received $1.00 for golf instead of the potential $1.50 he was promised had he completed all items. Totals may be kept across the bottom if needed.

Figure 42

Time Log

(Secondary)

Name LINDA **Date** SEPT 24-29

Instructions: The student may record *either* proposed study time for the week (plan) or actual study time for the week (monitor). Use specific subject names. School hours may be boxed off to separate school time from non-school time.

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00		SH SPELLING		SH SPELLING			
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00	ENGLISH		ENGLISH	ENGLISH			
8:00		MATH		MATH			
9:00							

Figure 43

Time Log

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student may record *either* proposed study time for the week (plan) or actual study time for the week (monitor). Use specific subject names. School hours may be boxed off to separate school time from non-school time.

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							

Figure 44

Study Plan - Chart - Contract

(Secondary)

Name SCOTT THOMPSON Date OCT 7-14

Instructions: The student lists jobs for the week with the parent agreeing to pay the earning portion. The student initials for the earning categories and the parent initials for the job (completion) categories.

What I Am To Do

Job		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
PRACTICE TRUMPET FOR 30 MIN. M.W.F.	1	RT O.K.		RT OK		NO!		
REDRAW BIOLOGY LABORATORY SHEETS	2		RT OK.		RT OK.			
TYPE ENGLISH PAPER	3					RT OK.		
TELEPHONE FOR A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW	4						RT O.K.	
	X							

Totals

What I Can Earn

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Comments
1	MONEY FOR GOLF S.T.		MONEY FOR GOLF S.T.					50¢ PER PRACTICE SESSION
2		SODA POP S.T.		SODA POP S.T.				-NONE-
3						CAR KEYS FOR EVENING S.T.	S.T	TO DRIVE (IN TOWN ONLY) IF BUYS OWN GAS
4						BORROW TENNIS RACKET S.T		MUST RETURN TO STORAGE CHEST BY 9:00 SUNDAY NIGHT
~~5~~								

Scott Thompson
(Student Signature)

Robert Thompson
(Supervisor Signature)

Figure 45

Study Plan - Chart - Contract

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** ________

Instructions: The student lists jobs for the week with the parent agreeing to pay the earning portion. The student initials for the earning categories and the parent initials for the job (completion) categories.

What I Am To Do

Job	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

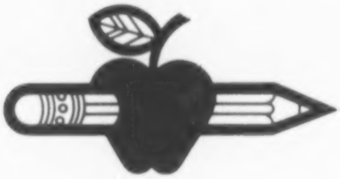
Totals

What I Can Earn

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Comments
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

(Student Signature)

(Supervisor Signature)



Chapter 8

Incomplete Work

Scheduling Priorities and Principles
Allowing Enough Time for Quality Work
Dealing With Distractions and Interruptions
Helping Students to Ask for Help
Double Checking for Needed Materials
Checking for Completion Across All Aspects of Work

Parents:
Why is the homework incomplete?

Students:
I was absent last week and just heard today that it was assigned while I was gone.

I didn't have time to finish, Dad, I did the best I could.

I didn't have the right materials to do it right so I just skipped that part.

I guess I just forgot.

Hey—remember when you interrupted me with that errand? I never got back to it. It's your fault.

I thought I could do it in about twenty minutes, but actually I only finished the first three questions when the bell rang and I had to hand it in.

Don't get on my back, I did most of it, didn't I?

Scheduling Priorities and Principles

Some very practical guidelines are offered below for establishing new schedules. Indeed, many of the examples shown in this chapter and others utilize schedules. After reading this book, you will have many possibilities from which to personalize a choice. Several important aspects need to be considered before establishing your study schedule:

1. When and how much do you need to sleep in order to be truly rested?
2. When and for how long do you prefer to eat in order not to be overly hungry?
3. What are your most alert hours of the day? (There are definite preferences here from "early-birds to "night-owls.")

Using the above information, consider your specific study requirements:

1. How long of a period do you want to schedule for a first trial? If the problem is severe, a day by day approach for the first week may be best. Even with a daily plan, however, you need to plan ahead for those more complex, several-day assignments.
2. On a separate piece of paper, list all of your homework to be done in the time unit covered by your schedule. Place a number 1 by the one due first down to the highest number for the one due last. This will allow priority to be given to the proper areas. In a sense it says, "I *must* do this today and I *could* also do this." Such a system allows for interruptions and will keep the pace and expectations less stressful.
3. Obviously there is a need to estimate the time needed for each item. Trial and error will help make future estimates more realistic for similar assignments. You are bound to "miss" on the time at first. However, learn from your experience and modify the time allotment for the next schedule. In general, it is more pleasant to overestimate the time needed and be done early than to underestimate and be rushed. Error towards more time if you have a choice.
4. Remember to build in "dead time" to cover unexpected events—even for college level students. This is different from rest, eating, and activities units. For example, have one hour per evening, if possible, available for whatever, and then do something fun or restful if that time is not needed for study or other responsibilities.

Allowing Enough Time for Quality Work

For primary children, creating and strengthening the concepts of time and pacing are of great value. In Figure 46, a page has been divided into two sections for concentration for a first grader who cannot tell time. A separate time allotment has been made for each half by using a clock face The parent has the child pay attention only to the *minute* hand. The minute hand is important for small children who have very short attention spans. Estimate for the child how long it might take to do a portion of the worksheet and then make a little picture of how the clock face should look when they are finished. The message to the child is, "Don't rush, we know it is going to take you some time to do a good job. Keep working steadily, however, because time is 'moving'."

Figure 46

Clockface Pacing

(Elementary)

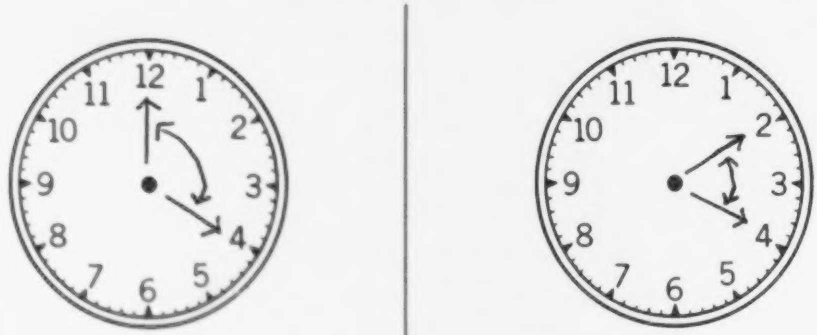


Figure 47

Estimated Time of Arrival Record

(Upper Elementary/Secondary)

Name KEVIN JONES **Class** MATH

Instructions: The student records the estimated time of assignment completion under the "E.T.A." heading. A recording of time started is also noted at that point. When the assignment is completed, the time is again noted and taken to the teacher/parent for verification. A point system can be established if desired.

Week of DEC 1-5	Time Started	E.T.A.	Time Arrived
Monday JR Teacher Initials	10:05	10:25	10:22
Tuesday JR Teacher Initials	10:10	10:45	10:45
Wednesday JR Teacher Initials	10:07	10:30	10:29
Thursday JR Teacher Initials	10:02	10:15	10:10
Friday JR Teacher Initials	10:06	10:40	10:37

Another time chart that can be used in class as well as for homework for a specific subject, in this case math, is shown in Figure 47. The concept of Estimated Time of Arrival was used with this sixth grade boy because he was familiar with the pilot's use of "guesstimating" the flying time of each trip. In the example, the student estimated the time of his assignment completion (arrival) with his teacher's help and then recorded the actual time. It helped to make him aware of wasted time. The teacher signed for all accurate or bested times for a point system.

Figure 48

Estimated Time of Arrival Record

(Upper Elementary/Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Class** ____________

Instructions:

The student records the estimated time of assignment completion under the "E.T.A." heading. A recording of time started is also noted at that point. When the assignment is completed, the time is again noted and taken to the teacher/parent for verification. A point system can be established if desired.

Week of ____________	Time Started	E.T.A.	Time Arrived
Monday ____________ Teacher Initials			
Tuesday ____________ Teacher Initials			
Wednesday ____________ Teacher Initials			
Thursday ____________ Teacher Initials			
Friday ____________ Teacher Initials			

A large number of middle school and older students have significant difficulty in estimating how much time several types of assignments will require for quality results. There are serious problems when students either overestimate or underestimate the time required.

Overestimation often leads to putting off the work because "it will take all night" or "all weekend." The delay in beginning the task is justified by genuinely believing that a long time period will be needed to accomplish the task. Precious thirty-minute attention span units are lost because "it wouldn't be worth it to just get started and then have to stop."

Underestimation often leads to minimizing the effort needed and then leaving the task until the "last minute." Once begun, it is obvious that more time is needed but, by then, it is too late. If the work is to be handed in on schedule, rushing through and "getting something down" is usually the result and the work quality is greatly lessened.

Both overestimation and underestimation can be dealt with by using a simple technique of timing a sample or first assignment in a given textbook, workbook, or worksheet. (See Figure 49.) Once a student has "a feel" for the time needed for certain types of assignments, one can more realistically plan for the required time. It cannot be overemphasized, however, that *each* style of worksheet or textbook will require different timings.

Using the blank sheet provided (Figure 50), first have your student estimate the time needed for a quality result. Next, have your student record the time when beginning work and the time when the work was completed on the form. If the timing is interrupted for some reason, you'll need to note this and take the lost time and concentration into account.

Another advantage of this procedure is that a good sample of concentration is often taken during this one experiment. Your interest in the results and your discussion with you child will give added importance to this new study skill your student is learning.

An able student, especially a college bound student, needs to become accomplished at looking at assignments and accurately estimating the time needed. For example, "It takes me three and a half minutes a page for the biography that I am reading, but it takes me one minute a page to read my English literature novel."

Figure 49

Time Estimation Card

(Secondary)

Instructions: The student records the subject to be studied and estimated time for completion before beginning work. The time when the work is completed is also recorded. A calculation of accuracy is then made and an "x" placed if the estimate was incorrect. If incorrect, record the reasons why where indicated on the form.

Overestimation

Name JIM Date DEC 3

Type of Assignment MATH

My Estimated time 35 MIN. Difference was in:

too much time estimated X

too little time estimated ______

My Actual time 20 MIN.

Reasons for Differences:

ONCE I DID THE FIRST TWO SLOWLY I UNDERSTOOD IT WELL AND WAS ABLE TO COMPLETE THE REST OF THE PROBLEMS QUICKLY

Underestimation

Name ALICE Date MARCH 17

Type of Assignment STUDY FOR ART HISTORY EXAM

My Estimated time 1½ HRS Difference was in:

too much time estimated ______

too little time estimated X

My Actual time 3¼ HRS

Reasons for Differences:

I HAD TO ANALYZE EACH FORM & STRUCTURE AND I NEEDED A FRIENDS ADVICE FOR THIS – WE WASTED SOME TIME TALKING.

Figure 50

Time Estimation Card

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student records the subject to be studied and estimated time for completion before beginning work. The time when the work is completed is also recorded. A calculation of accuracy is then made and an "x" placed if the estimate was incorrect. If incorrect, record the reasons why where indicated on the form.

Type of Assignment ______________________________

____

My Estimated time ______________ Difference was in:

too much time estimated ______________

too little time estimated ______________

My Actual time ______________________

Reasons for Differences:

____

____

Figure 51 contains a more elaborate time estimation system that also incorporates aspects of charting and the listing of weekly homework assignments. Inside the *Weekly Study Plan* booklet are two sheets which are changed each week. On the left hand side is the list of work to be done for the week. On the right hand side is a graph prepared in hour units. The use of graph paper will facilitate accurate work. A cross-hatch pattern of E and N was used to estimate the time needed over the week for each area, however, a color coding system would show results more clearly. For math, a three-hour estimate turned out to be double what was actually required. For social studies, the four-hour estimate was over by 1/2 hour. The science estimate of 1/2 hour was short by 3/4 of an hour while the English estimate of 1 1/2 hours was right on target.

Figure 51

Time Estimations for Weekly Study Plans

(Secondary)

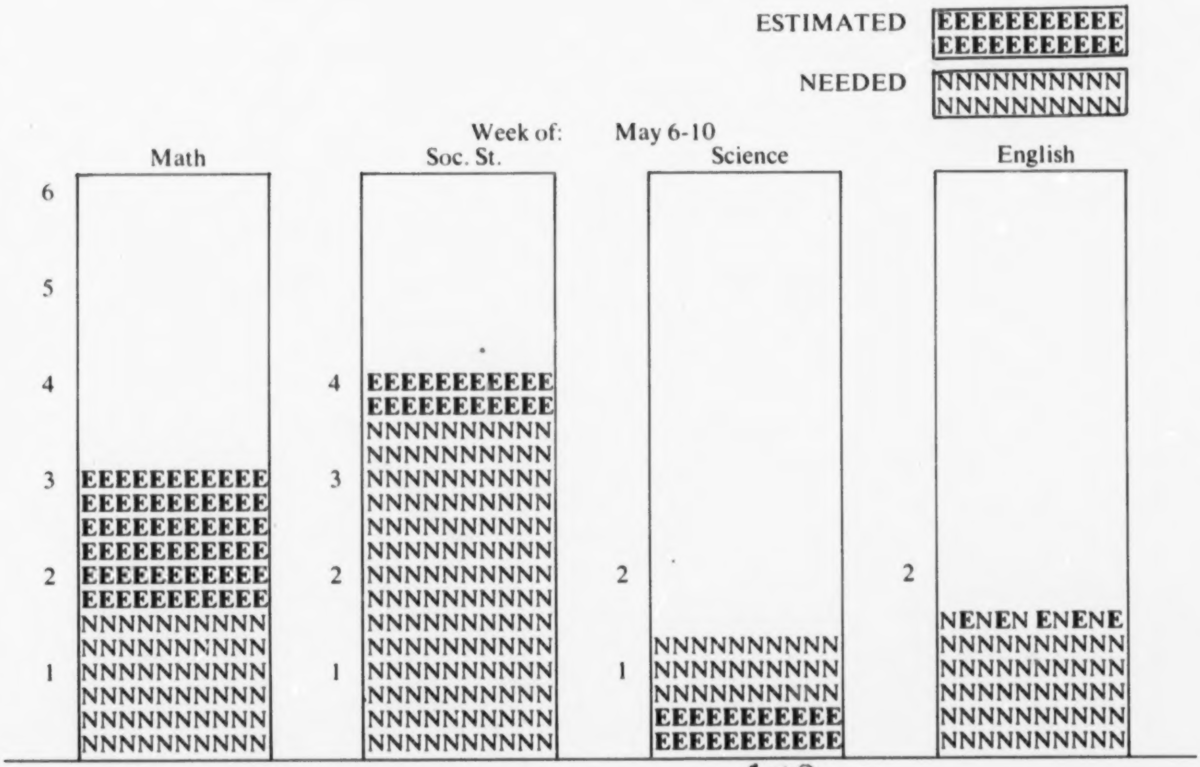
Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student lists the work for the week by subject area and then records time estimations for each. A *graph* of estimations is made for the week (shown as E or color-coded) from the Time for Week list. A follow-up coding is made on this same graph of actual time needed (shown as N or color-coded in a different color). Agreement between E and N is the goal.

Weekly List May 6-10 (Dates) Name Joyce

		Time for Week (Estimated)
Math :	1 page per night test on Thursday	3 Hrs. (E)
Soc. Studies :	5 page paper due Tuesday Quiz on Friday Start oral report outline	4 Hrs. (E)
Science :	Recopy laboratory report	1/2 Hr. (E)
English :	3 grammer workbook pages 15 min/day reading book	1 1/2 Hrs. (E)

Needed will be recorded (N)



A final idea for a study plan and chart is Figure 52 which would be helpful if your child has a fairly short attention span. Under "Comments" on this sheet, you will see that each unit (the squares on the right hand side) indicates the *maximum* amount of time that this student is probably able to concentrate with good effort. You and your child decide how long to study before you will both agree that it is long enough. A break of at least five minutes to get up and move around will then be beneficial. A commitment to units of effort rather than to time, as such, is made in this case.

This study plan (Figure 52) is made to reflect how many units of concentration it will take to complete the plan in one week. Barbara estimated that it was going to take her three units to complete the science review of chapter seven on Tuesday. Two units were given. It was sufficient. She overestimated the amount of time it was going to take her. She wrote that on Tuesday she also had to write spelling sentences from unit 45. She thought it would take about one unit; she gave one unit, and it was completed. Barbara estimated that on Wednesday the geography map drawings of Europe would take five units of concentration, but actually they took six. In this case, she underestimated how many units of concentration it would take. This is a very nice strategy for helping children become more accurate in estimating how long certain kinds of assignments take.

Figure 52
Concentration Unit Plan
(Secondary)

Name BARBARA **Date** MARCH 5-9

Instructions: The student records the type of assignment and date, then records the estimated number of concentration units on the blank provided. As each unit is completed, an "X" is placed in the box below the estimate. The time value of each unit is listed at the bottom of the plan.

Assignment 1: TUESDAY
(date
SCIENCE REVIEW - CHAPTER 7

Duties: 3
(units needed)

X	X				

Assignment 2: TUESDAY
(date
WRITE SPELLING SENTENCES
UNIT 45

Duties: 1
(units needed)

X					

Assignment 3: WEDNESDAY
(date
GEOGRAPHY MAP DRAWINGS OF
EUROPE

Duties: 5
(units needed)

X	X	X	X	X	X

Assignment 4: NONE
(date

Duties:
(units needed)

Comments:
1 UNIT WILL = 30 MINUTES

Figure 53

Concentration Unit Plan

(Secondary)

Name ______________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student records the type of assignment and date, then records the estimated number of concentration units on the blank provided. As each unit is completed, an "X" is placed in the box below the estimate. The time value of each unit is listed at the bottom of the plan.

Assignment 1: __________ (date	Duties: __________ (units needed)

Assignment 2: __________ (date	Duties: __________ (units needed)

Assignment 3: __________ (date	Duties: __________ (units needed)

Assignment 4: __________ (date	Duties: __________ (units needed)

Comments: ______________________________

Figure 54

Long-range Planning Approach

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: Plan the *full* duration of a study unit (such as a quarter, trimester, or semester) on a single sheet. Record major examinations, papers, and projects based on course outlines. Important social events also may be included.

SEPT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	30			

OCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	30	31		

NOV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	30			

In Figure 54, a monthly calendar system is used as an extreme example of long range planning. Older students who may be commuting to school in other locations should identify such major events as midterms, finals, major projects, and holiday vacations farther in advance. Parents tracking several busy children at various age levels often need such an approach also.

Dealing With Distractions and Interruptions

The lure of pleasant distractions is a powerful time grabber from students of all ages. The types of distractions may change over time, but the cost in delay and loss of concentration often spell the difference between success and failure.

In general, distractions beyond the student's control may best be handled by planning around the source, such as avoiding a reading project when a younger sister practices her trumpet in the same room. Help your student to answer the following questions and then see some examples of answers following.

1. What "steals" my study effort when I think I am studying? If I catch my mind/eyes/ears wandering, what am I doing?
2. Can I eliminate that thief by studying at a different time? Place?
3. Can I control the theft by planning ahead?
4. Can I replace the unavoidable theft at certain time periods?

Some answers to the above mentioned questions:

1. My time is "stolen" by telephone calls from friends and Mom expects me to babysit my brother on a minute's notice.
2. I could study in my bedroom away from the telephone and tell my friends not to call between 7-9 p.m. unless it really is important. I can ask Mom to give me one night's "warning" about my babysitting responsibilities, unless it is an emergency.
3. Even when I babysit, I could wait until after bath time to do the reading assignment and then do it when the baby is asleep. I could "work in" some math work problem by problem, even when the baby is awake, because interruptions don't hurt as much then.
4. On nights before exams when I have "lost" study time, I will get up an hour earlier than usual and do a final review.

In general, parents must be certain their demands on their students are realistic and as consistent as possible. Scheduling is very difficult if a haphazard routine is in effect day after day for no good reason. Family crisis times and holidays tend to be erratic for most families, with good reason, and are exceptions to the rule.

You may be pleased to notice that when adults become more organized and purposeful in their approach to study skill issues, the students benefit from a change in "atmosphere." From observing the more orderly planning around them (called more technically, modeling of behavior), they may pattern themselves without conscious effort to do so. Modeling is a powerful influence and it may as well be positive rather than negative! A less cluttered environment is also helpful. Eliminate visual distractions from the work area.

If you are living with and loving a distractible child of any age, it is very important that a serious effort to build concentration be made. Shorter periods for younger students are gradually lengthened up to 45 minutes to one hour for high school students. This effort does require pre-planning of "what works best" for each unique personality. Many teenage students can and do benefit from such techniques and are proud of the quality of work they can learn to accomplish.

One closing comment concerns older students working part time jobs. Many students reap a good deal of pleasure and learn new skills from such vocational experiences far beyond the financial rewards. However, for most students, twenty hours per week or under is best if financially possible. More hours than this usually cuts drastically into study time, needed socialization time (an important area of growth during adolescent years!), or sleep.

Helping Students to Ask for Help

In every hour of classroom teaching, there are usually many students who are "lost" during that particular lesson. Some of these students have no trouble asking questions and getting helpful answers. However, a majority of students would rather not ask questions before the entire class. Indeed, I would venture to guess that the more "lost" the student, the less likely one is going to ask for help. Some pointers to suggest are:

1. Questions can often be asked in more of a one-to-one basis if students take advantage of the times when teachers circulate around the room, return to their desks, stand in the back of the room, wait at the door between classes, or work in the room before or after school.
2. Practice in asking workable questions also builds confidence. Have your student ask you the question(s) that should have been asked of the teacher. Here are some general guidelines for receiving usable answers:

Less Helpful	More Helpful
A. Ask for clarification for each item separately.	
(Language Class Example)	
I don't understand the instructions. How do you do it?	For this first part, do I circle or underline the correct answer?

Less Helpful	More Helpful
B. State what is already understood.	
(Science Class Example)	
I'm mostly lost on the "lab" report. Can you help?	I have the first two steps completed, but don't understand how to "purify the water" in step 3, so I'm stalled here at this point. What exactly does "purify" mean? How can I do that?
C. Repeat back new understandings for verification.	
(Woodshop Example)	
"Okay, I get it now!"	So you mean I need to list and then define these saw safety skills on a separate sheet of paper. Is that right? I will find the meanings in the glossary, yes?
D. Be as specific as possible.	
(Art Class Example)	
Something about that background isn't looking right. What is it?	Up there in the clouds, I believe the color or perspective is off. Which do you think it is or is it both?

3. Questions can be asked of other reliable sources of information if the teacher is not available. Such sources are:

   Other students in the present class
   Former students of the class (perhaps brothers or sisters)
   Substitute teachers
   Homeroom/study hall supervisory teachers
   Counselors
   Parents

4. Questions should be asked as close to the time as they arise as possible while memories are still fresh and the necessary information is still available (such as laboratory set up, charts on the board, and pages on the overhead.)

Double Checking for Needed Materials

A major stumbling block to completing work well and on time is the disconcerting lack of needed materials. This problem becomes even more serious if the assignment has been delayed to the last moment when stores are frequently closed and borrowing from friends is not a possibility. In some cases, you have already bought two sets of many items and now you are terribly frustrated with the missing materials because they have been lost, loaned, or left behind at school.

Some of you, however, may need to take more responsibility in finding out if the problem is materials. If you promised your son that you would go out to get him colored pencils, do it! Please! He is in trouble with the teacher every day he goes to class without them. That hurts your child's self-esteem. He feels like a fool when he has to keep borrowing. Helping procedures to alleviate this problem are:

1. Plan *for the year* by purchasing all of the basic materials and then obtain needed replacements *on a monthly basis*. Schools generally provide a "needs list" during registration for each grade or class. Include a school supply section in the *weekly* shopping list and have your student list items on a regular basis. Plan *for the day* by asking early in the evening if any special supplies are needed or have been forgotten at school.
2. Maintain a small supply of backup materials in a home desk or drawer. Encourage your students to devote a small portion of time each week to putting away such materials in the agreed upon location so that all family members can find them with ease. Some families resort to color-coded supplies for each child if the materials are inexpensive and will be needed in some quantity (such as pencils, erasers, and crayons.) Storage containers can be made from a wide variety of emptied cans and product boxes, if necessary. In such cases where there are many children in the family, scrapes of contact paper could be used to individualize these containers. Keep supplies as near to the study area where they are to be used as possible to prevent "stringing them out" all over the house.
3. Have a plan for storing supplies which are regularly moved between places such as home, school, or library. Allow your student to devise the plan in order to give the child "ownership" of this responsibility. Offer help and suggestions if the system is not working adequately. Many small supply bags come punched for carrying in notebooks. Carrying cases often times have special compartments for various items.
4. Borrowing and loaning should occur only on an emergency basis.

Checking for Completion Across All Aspects of Work

An assignment is not ready to be handed in until all facets of the assignment are checked off as completed. Beginning in the middle school grades, some complex assignments may have several different "action steps" which could each have different deadlines. In this way, large tasks can be broken down into smaller pieces, each having a shorter time focus and, perhaps, material needs. This skill of breaking down large tasks into smaller, orderly steps is called *task analysis.*

Many students in top sections may have long assignments such as term papers or science projects to be worked on for six weeks at a time. At the end of six weeks, everything is required. The book or project may count as the total grade. There are many.requests for that kind of work in high school and college so we need to build some training by middle school age for checking completion. Likewise, we have large numbers of high school students who fail courses because, in fact, they did not even get started. Nobody took the time to check until it was too late.

The example in Figure 55 shows how "one big assignment" actually could become several smaller sub-assignments. If each phase is completed in proper sequence, at least two new pieces of knowledge will exist: 1) the content of the assignment and 2) the process of task analysis.

The basic questions to be asked are: l) What all do I need to do? 2) In what order do I need to do it? 3) When? 4) With what materials? 5) With what help? 6) With how much time for each step? Some progress should be made on long term projects through a series of steps.

Another consideration for secondary students is that many of them do not commit enough time to complete their work carefully. They wait until the last minute before they prepare for a test or work on a project. With the *Time and Assignment Planning Schedule* in Figure 56, sit down with your child, on perhaps a Monday of each week, and ask what major assignments are due for that week. On the sample in Figure 55, the first assignment had been filled out as science notebook. The task is to take item number one and develop it across the page under each heading.

In looking at this specific example, what has this mother worked out with her son? The project is a science notebook. Step 1 says: "Must take notes from class to be copied." What will the child need to do that? His notebook and paper. When is he going to start that? Monday. When will it be completed?

By Tuesday. Step 2. He has to do the drawings from a film that he saw. What will he need to do those drawings? Colored pencils and paper. He plans to wait until Thursday to do the drawings and they have to be finished by Thursday. Step 3 is to buy a folder in which to put this project. He is going to need money and maybe even a ride to get that folder. He should schedule that for about Wednesday, so the parent, knowing this on Monday, makes the purchase a shared responsibility.

Step 4. He needs approval for a title for this project and he needs an appointment with his teacher for a conference to discuss this. He had better start working to get that conference on Tuesday because it has to be done by Thursday night. He must put the title on the folder that he purchased on Wednesday. Finally, he must hand in the project. The task is self explanatory, but he has to put it in the correct place. He starts handing it in on Friday and it better be in on Friday, because that is when it is due.

For a high school student carrying three or four academic subjects, one may have four projects of this type every week. If one spreads it out over more time, it will probably be less tedious and less boring as well.

The second assignment in Figure 55 is to have the student plan a book report. Encourage self statements such as, "I have three weeks to work on it. So, for two weeks, I will just read the book. (It is 200 pages.) Then, I will take one night to list out all the characters and the events I thought were important. On the next night, I am going to write a rough draft. On the fourth effort, I am going to recopy it in ink in the spiral notebook. (This is the only way my teacher will accept it). Finally for the fifth task, I am going to hand it in."

If a child sees the whole book report as one unit: to read the book; to organize thoughts; and write the report neatly in ink in the notebook and thinks it can all be done in thirty minutes, I am sure you can see why that child ends up with very poor work. The student needed to start much sooner and needed to know for every step, "What do I have to have to do that step? What pace do I need to maintain for quality work in this skill and topic? Do I have to go buy something? Do I have to remember to bring materials home? When am I going to do that step, and when am I going to have that step completed?" In the book report task, recopy remaining work onto next week's schedule until completed so that a constant cycling will occur. Not all new tasks will begin on a Monday.

Figure 55

Time and Assignment Planning Schedule

(Secondary)

Name LARRY **Date** FEB 2

Instructions: The student records assignments in the blanks at the top of the page and then moves *each* assignment into the separate task portion below in order to plan more specifically.

Major Assignments for Week

1. SCIENCE NOTEBOOK
2. BOOK REPORT
3.
4.
5.
6.

Assignment No. 1 Steps (in order)	Actions/Material Needed	Start (date)	Complete (date)
1. COPY NOTES FROM CLASS	NOTEBOOK AND PAPER	MON.	BY TUE.
2. DRAWINGS FROM FILES	COLORED PENCILS + PAPER	THURS.	THURS.
3. BUY A FOLDER	MONEY + RIDE TO STORE	WED.	WED.
4. APPROVAL FOR TITLE	TEACHER'S CONFERENCE	TUES.	BY THURS.
5. HAND IN TO TEACHER	—	FRI.	FRI.
6.			

Assignment No. 2 Steps (in order)	Actions/Material Needed	Start (date)	Complete (date)
1. READ THE BOOK	BOOK AND PENCIL	2/2	2/16
2. LIST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN SUMMARY	PENCIL, PAPER + BOOK	2/17	2/17
3. WRITE A ROUGH DRAFT	PENCIL + PAPER	2/18	2/19
4. RECOPY TO FINAL FORM	PEN + SPIRAL NOTEBOOK	2/19	2/19
5. HAND IN TO TEACHER	—	2/20	2/20
6.			

Figure 56

Time and Assignment Planning Schedule

(Secondary)

Name ____ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student records assignments in the blanks at the top of the page and then moves *each* assignment into the separate task portion below in order to plan more specifically.

Major Assignments for Week

1. ____________________ 4. ____________________
2. ____________________ 5. ____________________
3. ____________________ 6. ____________________

Assignment No. 1 Steps (in order)	Actions/Material Needed	Start (date)	Complete (date)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.			

Assignment No. 2 Steps (in order)	Actions/Material Needed	Start (date)	Complete (date)
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.			

Chapter 9

Missing Work

Recording Assignments and Deadlines
Dealing with Delays
Storing Homework to be Finished or Graded
Handing In Work Properly
Loaning and Sharing Work Without Losing It

Parents:
What is this note on your "F" notice about 14 missing assignments?

Students:
I'll do them tomorrow during study hall. It will be okay.

I'm sure it's in my locker—I think—or maybe my bookbag at Joe's house.

Mom—I swear I put that assignment on her desk yesterday—the teacher lost it, not me.

Sherry has been copying my outline and she's been sick all week—they don't have a phone.

I stuck that worksheet in my laboratory book and now they are both missing. I must have been robbed—I'm not joking, Dad.

We didn't have to do that chapter. The teacher never did assign it.

Recording Assignments and Deadlines

How can I help find out if work is missing and why for my elementary child? One idea would be to make sure that your child has some pocket folders in which to place the work. There are at least two different ways to use folders. Your student could have a different color folder for each of the major subjects: reading; spelling; math; and perhaps one other folder for remaining kinds of course work. On the inside of these folders you could have a "Do side" and a "Done side."

What this would say to the student is, "If I have worksheets in the Do side of my folder, that means I have work left to complete. On the other hand, almost every day in an elementary classroom, work is graded, recorded, and then returned to students. Repeatedly you will hear teachers urging children to take these worksheets home and share them with their parents. Children should be encouraged then and there to open the folder and put the returned worksheets on the Done side.

Furthermore, the child should be given a minute or two at the end of the day to clean out the Done side and take the work home. You would be surprised at the horrendous messes sometimes found in elementary classrooms when children "save" 30, 40, or 50 worksheets from months ago all intermixed with work that needed to be done today. That would be difficult for an adult to handle, much less a small child! As a parent of an elementary student, you should expect to see some graded work returned nearly every school day.

Another possibility is to use a single folder, if that is what would be more efficient or more affordable for you. When employing one folder, a way of effectively making it more versatile is to tape an envelope to the front of it. A one folder system can be used with a card (3x5) for each day's work. The student records (with the teacher's help) a list of the day's work on the card. For very young students, the teacher may prefer to do the recording. As the work is completed, the teacher checks it off. At the end of each day, the folder goes home to parents with the card inserted in the envelope. Parents remove and review the card as their record of work completed during the day. The question to your child should be, "If it isn't checked off, where is it? Your teacher is indicating you did not finish this work." For example, a coloring sheet was handed in and given credit. Parents should not be alarmed if they do not find that in the folder. If it says that a reading page has not yet been given credit, it would be reasonable to think it should be in this folder for finishing during the evening hours.

Alternative ways in which cards can be used to bring order and a sense of progress for students in early primary grades are to use special markers. Card punches, stars, stickers, and small dots can be used as such markers. Daily cards can be taped to the school or home desk. When utilized at home, parents may often be noting only *completion* of work begun under teacher supervision at school.

Worksheets can be color-coded with a star in the upper right hand corner to match a "to do" card list with the student handing in the pages in a specified order before credit could be earned. The system prevents a tendency to first spend a large amount of seat work concentration on coloring sheets and then delay or ignore the more needed reading, writing, and math sheets.

Another possibility for helping students at the upper elementary level would be to look at a weekly study list, or maybe just a daily list. In Figure 57 we have a partially filled out list that indicates spelling is due on Thursday. It has not been completed because the parent has not initialed it. It might be work that needs to be done this evening, for example. It is good to know, however, that social studies has been done. It was due Wednesday and a parent has initialed that the worksheet has been seen. We may reasonably assume that the work has been returned to school. This provides an accurate record for parents to have for their students. If this specific worksheet later earns no credit, you know that the problem in your child's organizational system is losing work that has been completed. One final word regarding the lost work topic—recognize that even at elementary levels with two or three different teachers for each child, different procedures for turning in papers are often enforced.

Figure 57

Weekly Study List

(Upper Elementary/Secondary)

Name RICK **Date** SEPT. 7-11

Instructions: The student and the parent together list subjects to be studied for the week and together they record when the work was done. The parent initials the list each time a piece of work is completed and the list is saved from one grading period until the next (usually one quarter of the year).

SPELLING SENTENCES	THURSDAY	
(Task No. 1)	(date done)	(parent initials)
SOCIAL STUDIES MAP	WEDNESDAY	T.A.
(Task No. 2)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 3)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 4)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 5)	(date done)	(parent initials)

Figure 58

Weekly Study List

(Upper Elementary/Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student and the parent together list subjects to be studied for the week and together they record when the work was done. The parent initials the list each time a piece of work is completed and the list is saved from one grading period until the next (usually one quarter of the year).

(Task No. 1)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 2)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 3)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 4)	(date done)	(parent initials)
(Task No. 5)	(date done)	(parent initials)

Another style of assignment sheet that could cover a day or up to a week is featured in Figure 59. It offers a system for checking when the work is started, half done, and finished. If *starting* is a major stumbling block, then use such a system and pay special attention to that factor. If *beginning but then losing interest before completion* is a problem, then make special note of that factor on this format.

Figure 59

Subject Progress List
(Secondary)

Name DEBBIE Week of DEC 10-17

Instructions: Following the recording of assignments by the student, a plan for studying is made and recorded. As each assignment is begun, an "X" is made in the designated box. Again at the 1/2 point, an "X" is made. A final "X" is recorded when the work is finished. Special emphasis may be placed on any portion of the assigment as needed to fully motivate the student.

Subject Assignment	Plan to do when	started	Progress 1/2	finished
PRACTICE VOCAL SOLO	TUES. P.M.	X	X	X
MAKE A SEWING STITCH CHT.	THURS A.M. BEFORE SCH.			
READ SHORT STORY FOR DRAMA CLASS	WED. & THURS.	X	X	
STUDY VOCABULARY WORDS	WED P.M.	X	X	X

Teacher/Parent monitors daily

In our example in Figure 59, Debbie has four tasks listed for this week and she is in various stages of completion with them. She could review her form at the point shown and such questions from a parent could be:

1. What is left to do?
2. Do you want to finish what has been started before beginning the sewing chart? (probably a good idea)
3. Is there any special problem or questions before we proceed with the scheduled work?

Figure 60

Subject Progress List

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Week of** __________

Instructions: Following the recording of assignments by the student, a plan for studying is made and recorded. As each assignment is begun, an "X" is made in the designated box. Again at the 1/2 point, an "X" is made. A final "X" is recorded when the work is finished. Special emphasis may be placed on any portion of the assigment as needed to fully motivate the student.

Subject Assignment	Plan to do when	started	Progress 1/2	finished

Teacher/Parent monitors daily

Parents who desire to keep track of accomplishments by tasks over a period of time and also monitor daily effort on all tasks will find the next format useful. In Figure 61, a matrix is used as a training device using familiar tasks in order that a count can either be made *across* a single *goal* for the week or *down* a list of goals for an entire *day*. The parents using this arrangement had different types of rewards per task and day in order to keep the process more interesting. Some duties were more heavily rewarded in order to build a sense of responsibility in areas often neglected. Once the process was working successfully, a conversion to assignment skills was made by week three.

The three study goals were estimated to require about 30 minutes per evening. The fifth grade student later observed that one could "do" an entire list well in less than one hour per day and this was a great surprise. "I still have so much free time and now hardly anyone 'yells' at me about all that stuff."

Figure 61

Matrix of Home Duties

(Upper Elementary)

Name JOHN **Dates** APR 28- MAY 4

Instructions: The student glues a small dot or sticker for each box where tasks are done. Encouragement to complete *all* boxes in each direction is made by focusing first on columns and later in the week on rows.

Task	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Total
Feed the dog	●	●		●	●	●		Total 5
Put toys away in bedroom			●	●		●	●	Total 4
Put Pajamas in drawer each morning	●	●	●	●		●	●	Total 6
Place dirty clothes in basket	●		●	●	●		●	Total 5
Make bed		●	●		●	●	●	Total 5
	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	

Earning all dots in a row for 1 week will be worth 7 points reward

Earning all dots in a column for 1 day will be worth 5 points reward

Is the work missing because the student did not know of the assignment? This is a major problem for some students. Many times students receive poor or even failing grades, not because the work they did was so poor, but because so little of the work required ever got handed in for credit.

There are several reasons why a child would not know of an assignment. It is important to know what is happening with your child. If your child is absent, is a check made to find out what was assigned? Is the student tardy a lot, getting to class five minutes late when instructions are usually over, or is the student in the class but not paying attention; writing notes, or talking to a neighbor? Does your child seldom bother to write anything down, depending on memory that is seldom reliable? Could it be your student did not have any materials to get started, so when everybody else started, no effort was attempted? Now, the assignment has been forgotten and it was due last Tuesday.

An idea that might be of help to you is a simple assignment sheet which a student could carry along to better record assignments. Sometimes children, quite truthfully say, "I did not know I had to do that. I never heard my teacher say that. I must have been at the dentist the day that was assigned," or "I came to class late that day, Mom, because I was called to the office to turn in my swimming permission slip." So many things happen during the school day and children do not always attend to all of the directions. If they have developed within themselves the expectation that "I do not leave any classroom until I am sure I know whether there is an assignment or not," they will be far ahead in the entire procedure. Some students may prefer to use a commercial assignnment booklet available in many stores.

In the secondary school example that follows in Figure 62, you will note that each period is accounted for. There is a special box for a study hall in school coded (S.H.) and homework is coded (H.W.). Overdue work, the most critical category, is given space for listing the details. Hopefully, in a short time only a few boxes will be needed! The form starts with Tuesday at the top because it is picked up/sent Monday at school with a *to be ready* designation only for work not completed within the class period. See the example for possible responses (Ann carried this home on a Monday evening). If this could meet your needs, copy the blank form (Figure 63) and give it a try.

Figure 62

Homework Recording by Period and Day

(Secondary)

Name ANN Week of MARCH 3-10

Instructions: The student records assignments for *each* period of each day. If the work is to be completed in a study hall, an "X" is placed in the "SH" box. If the work is to be completed as homework, an "X" is placed in the "HW" box.

TO BE Ready	SH		HW	Overdue:
Tue		1. WORK ALL IN		
		2. SPELLING LIST	X	
		3. NO WORK DUE		
	X	4. FINISH MATH P. 171		MATH WORKSHEETS 162 & 164 - ODD # PROBLEMS (NO CREDIT AFTER 3/7!)
		5. READ P. 40-45	X	
		6. NO WORK		
		7. PRACTICE VIOLIN	X	
Wed		1. NO WORK		Overdue:
		2. NO WORK		
		3. HAD FIELD TRIP		
		4. P. 174	X	
		5. READ P. 46-52		
		6. NO WORK		
		7. PRACTICE VIOLIN	X	
Thur	X	1. SET UP DISPLAY		Overdue:
		2. NO WORK		
		3. GUEST SPEAKER		
		4. P. 175	X	LAST WEEK'S → JOURNAL ENTRY STILL MISSING!
		5. JOURNAL DUE	X	
		6. NO WORK		
		7. PRACTICE VIOLIN	X	
Fri	X	1. REMOVE DISPLAY		Overdue:
	X	2. FINISH STORY		
		3. HAD FILM		
		4. P. 178	X	
	X	5. LABORATORY DRAWING		
		6. NO WORK		
		7. ORCHESTRA CONCERT	X	
Mon		1. WRITE SUMMARY	X	Overdue:
		2. TAPE RECORD SONGS	X	
	X	3. DEMONSTRATION PRE		
		4. P. 180	X	
		5. NO WORK		
	X	6. COMPLETE DRAWINGS		
		7. NO WORK		

Figure 63

Homework Recording by Period and Day

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Week of** ______________

Instructions: The student records assingments for *each* period of each day. If the work is to be completed in a study hall, an "X" is placed in the "SH" box. If the work is to be completed as homework, an "X" is placed in the "HW" box.

TO BE Ready	SH		HW	Overdue:
Tue		1.		
		2.		
		3.		
		4.		
		5.		
		6.		
		7.		
Wed		1.		Overdue:
		2.		
		3.		
		4.		
		5.		
		6.		
		7.		
Thur		1.		Overdue:
		2.		
		3.		
		4.		
		5.		
		6.		
		7.		
Fri		1.		Overdue:
		2.		
		3.		
		4.		
		5.		
		6.		
		7.		
Mon		1.		Overdue:
		2.		
		3.		
		4.		
		5.		
		6.		
		7.		

When is an assignment due? Some children can handle this quite well if they are in school every day, but understand very poorly that if they are absent for three days, there will be makeup work to do. Time after time it is said of some students, "Makes no effort to *do makeup* work." "Makes no effort to *check on* makeup work." By the middle school level, this habit can make the difference between passing and failing a course if your child misses school with frequency due to unavoidable reasons.

There is nothing more discouraging and insulting than the student who says to the teacher, "Did we do anything yesterday?" Hopefully, any teacher with self respect would be able to say, "We did many activities." You could assume then, that if your child comes home and says, "Not one thing needs to be made up" that you have a child who is not very accountable or who may be lying in order to avoid homework. Teachers are not going to chase students down if they have several hundred children in class by the end of the day. They cannot do that. It is a physical impossibility. They may eventually note the problem, but the situation will be severe by the time the pattern has been caught.

You could ask your child to "carry a worksheet such as that shown in Figure 65 for the day, and bring it home tonight." Talk about what has occurred since missing classes with the flu for two days. The teacher would check off the box when the homework is submitted and you would sign it across the bottom. This is your way of saying: "Our child is accountable, we assume that everything missed in any form that can be made up is returned." (Some things cannot be made up.) This same sheet could be used as an assignment sheet to be carried every day whether classes were missed classes or not.

In our example in Figure 64, the student has prefilled the name and dates on the top of the page. Note that each class period has been accounted for, even if no work was due. The teacher's check clears up the responsibility for that particular subject area. Encourage your student to offer the sheet to the teacher near the beginning of the class period in order to allow time for the teacher to accurately complete the assignment portion. This is not well received ten seconds before "bell time."

Sometimes teachers prefer to let the student do the recording, but the new due date should be written with teacher watching/agreeing. This date can make a major difference if full credit is being offered. Many schools employ a rule of one day allowed for each day missed unless very unusual circumstances are recognized.

A blank form (Figure 65) has been provided for copying and use. Give it a try next time makeup work occurs.

Figure 64

Make Up Assignment Sheet

(Secondary)

Name GARY **Date Missed** FEB 4-7

Instructions: The student records the class title and specifics of thge assignments. The new due date is listed with teacher agreement. As the work is turned in, the teacher checks it off as received. When all boxes are checked, the list is signed by the parent. Submission *may* be made to a counselor, if appropriate.

Period 1: Class FINE ARTS (subject)
Assignments TEXT P. 191 - 207 , P. 225 - 237
New Due Date FRIDAY OF THIS WEEK Teacher Check In ☐

Period 2: Class LANGUAGE ARTS (subject)
Assignments BOOK REPORT
New Due Date THURSDAY - NEXT WEEK Teacher Check In ☐

Period 3: Class MATH (subject)
Assignments 3 SHEETS ATTACHED - DO EVEN # ONLY
New Due Date BY THIS FRIDAY Teacher Check In ☐

Period 4: Class P.E. (subject)
Assignments NONE
New Due Date Teacher Check In ☐

Period 5: Class SCIENCE (subject)
Assignments 2 LAB. REPORTS AND VOCABULARY CARDS
New Due Date MONDAY OF NEXT WEEK Teacher Check In ☐

Period 6: Class STUDY HALL (subject)
Assignments
New Due Date Teacher Check In ☐

Period 7: Class BAND (subject)
Assignments ARRANGE TO MAKE UP 3 PRACTICE TIMES
New Due Date (SEE TEACHER TOMORROW) Teacher Check In ☐

(parent's signature)

Turn in the list to your counselor when completely checked in ☐ by your teacher.

Figure 65

Make Up Assignment Sheet

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date Missed** __________

Instructions: The student records the class title and specifics of the assignments. The new due date is listed with teacher agreement. As the work is turned in, the teacher checks it off as received. When all boxes are checked, the list is signed by the parent. Submission *may* be made to a counselor, if appropriate.

Period 1: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 2: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 3: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 4: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 5: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 6: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

Period 7: Class ____________ (subject)
Assignments ______________________________
New Due Date ______________ Teacher Check In ☐

____
(parent's signature)

Turn in the list to your counselor when completely checked in ☐ by your teacher.

A single subject make-up assignment can be written with needed instructions if a class has been missed for several days. Sometimes special arrangements are needed for such situations. One sheet could be attached to each subject's workbook, notebook, or textbook. In our examples in Figures 66 and 67, the teacher has noted that Jim needs to make up several pages of work in math and Karen needs to make up various project steps in her home economics class. A blank has been provided following the examples. Note that a parent signs when all noted work has been verified as finished and the slip is then returned with the work to school.

Figure 66

Single Assignment Make-up Tab

(Secondary)

Name JIM ANDREWS **Date Given** 11/6 - 11/9

Date due 11/20

Instructions: The student records missed assignments with teacher verification for accuracy. Specific instructions are noted. When the work is completed, it is dated by the parents and signed. This slip is then attached to the work for return to the teacher.

Assignment for MATH 4

Materials BOOK: MATH FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

Pages 97-114

Specific Instructions: DO ONLY TOP HALF OF PAGES 97-103. DO EVEN NUMBERED PROBLEMS FOR PAGES 104-110. DO ALL WORK ON PAGES 111-114.

Comments:

GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK!

Work completed on 11/13

Mrs Kay Andrews

Parent's signature

Figure 67

Single Assignment Make-up Tab

(Secondary)

Name KAREN **Date Given** 11/6 - 11/8

Date due 11/20

Instructions: The student records missed assignments with teacher verification for accuracy. Specific instructions are noted. When the work is completed, it is dated by the parents and signed. This slip is then attached to the work for return to the teacher.

Assignment for SEWING - FINISH APRON

Materials (SEND HOME IN SEWING KIT)

Pages —

Specific Instructions: FOLLOW FLOW CHART PINNED TO MATERIAL AND HAVE KAREN CHECK-OFF EACH STEP AS COMPLETED.

Comments: CALL ME AT SCHOOL OR HOME IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ROOM IS OPEN UNTIL 4:30 IF NEEDED

Work completed on 11/19

Mrs Randy J

Parent's signature

Figure 68

Single Assignment Make-up Tab

(Secondary)

Name ______________________ **Date Given** __________

Date due ______________________

Instructions: The student records missed assignments with teacher verification for accuracy. Specific instructions are noted. When the work is completed, it is dated by the parents and signed. This slip is then attached to the work for return to the teacher.

Assignment for ______________________

Materials ______________________

Pages ______________________

Specific Instructions: ______________________

Comments: ______________________

Work completed on ______________________

Parent's signature

Dealing with Delays

How common it is for students of all ages to honestly think, "I'll get to that schoolwork in just a little while." This tendency not to start a task has been discussed in other sections of this book, along with ways in which results can be disappointing. In most cases the issues seem to be:

1) Knowing how to start.
2) The belief that once started they cannot stop.
3) Fear that the work will be inferior.
4) "Hating" the task to be done.

The good news is that often, once started, many of these issues resolve themselves or at least become less problematic.

Some possible suggestions to encourage action are:

1. Set a firm but brief time (maybe only 15 minutes) when some small activity towards beginning will be made.
   a) Assemble needed materials in the study area.
   b) List parts of the task.
   c) Make a schedule of priorities for the work.
2. Begin an easier portion of the work if very uncertain. There are usually some materials or techniques that are more comfortable than others.
3. Request a friend's help to start and then seal the plan with a specific time and place to avoid the temptation to "just forget it."
4. Make the plan public to other family members so that they can encourage as well as cajole when the time arrives or when no activity is seen.
5. Encourage a self reward or other reward of real consequence if/when starting occurs. Encourage statements from your students such as, "I can only go to the early movie if I have telephoned for the journalism interview request *first*."
6. Make the setting of study as pleasant as possible even if the work cannot be, for example, with music, snack, a flower to enjoy, or comfortable clothes on.

This habit can be slow to improve and may spill over into many other areas of responsibility, so it is well worth attention! The important thing is you will have helped your child to get started. So, what are you waiting for?!

Storing Homework to be Finished or Graded

Did your student start the homework and then lose it? Who really knows for sure? It does *sound* better to parents to hear, "I started it. It was almost done, but it disappeared." It is like the fish that got away. The big issue here is, how is your child trying to store materials? If the work was finished but then lost, the problem is similar, but more tragic! Where did the student put those materials?!?!

There are some techniques for parents to use that might cut into this problem. The problem, in truth, may be quite complicated. Figure 69, "Plan of Materials for Student's Day," was developed for use when interviewing middle school or high school students who had admitted that much of their work was incomplete or missing.

One of the things you must do for such a student is find out:

1) "How do you try to organize your work?"
2) "What do you carry with you?"
3) "How do you carry it?"
4) "How do you store that work?"
5) "Where do you put it at the end of each class?"
6) "Where do you put it in your locker?"
7) "What parts of it go home and come back from home?"

Those are all important questions to ask. Using this sheet might make an interview with your child a little easier. It is structured to move down through the student's day; periods 1-7. Your student would tell you what subjects one has those periods, what materials are needed in those classes, and how or where one stores materials for that class. A heading at the top says, "Presently." This is how one is currently trying to do that. If it sounds complicated, (and you can understand in listening to your child why one is not doing well;) there are also two columns to suggest improving this plan. You might recommend to your student that one may need to be carrying different items and storing materials different ways.

An analysis such as, "This does not make sense to me. You go to your locker after every period and then you are tardy which causes you to miss directions. Can't you go to your locker when you arrive in the morning and before lunch and then right before physical education?"

There are other codes that you could use during discussion, such as how often your child goes to the locker, when a noon period would fall into this general plan or when your child walks directly from one class to the next. It is not unusual for a child to have many different teachers every day and to enter seven to eight classrooms. Every classroom is a different world from the one left behind. Changed expectations will be there. Various types of subject matter are being taught and it may be necessary for it to be handled differently. However, it is complicated for some inexperienced students who are not accustomed to handling that many different kinds of directions and procedures.

Why not make an agreement to try a better plan of action? Look over the example in Figure 69 and then use the blank form in Figure 70. Revise and improve it as you try the systems a week at a time. In our example, Keith has listed each of his classes, the "old" system, and the "new" plan to be tried. Notice that fewer locker stops are in the new plan as well as some storage differences. The new plan may need further changes, but hopefully each revision will help make the school day pass more efficiently and add up to improved learning and grades.

Figure 69

Plan of Materials for Student's Day

(Secondary)

For KEITH **Date** JAN 7

Date to be reviewed ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Instructions: The parent records the schedule along the left side and completes the present plan on a period by period basis. If changes appear wise, the new plan may be added under the suggested heading.

Enter Bldg. 8:10

	Presently (old)		Suggested (new)	
	materials carried	where/how work stored	materials carried	where/how work stored
Period 1 ENGLISH 2 >L	LIBRARY BOOK & PEN	IN BOOK IN LOCKER	NO CHANGE >L	NO CHANGE
Period 2 MECHANICAL DRAWING >L	PENCIL, TABLET, RULER	IN ROOM ON SHELVES	ADD A PROTECTOR ↓	NO CHANGE
Period 3 ALGEBRA >L	NOTEBOOK	NOTEBOOK	NO CHANGE ↓ >L	NOTEBOOK IN BAG TO CARRY HOME
Period 4 ART N >L	NONE	HOME ALL IN ROOM	NO CHANGE N	NO CHANGE
Period 5 GERMAN/ ↓	TEXTBOOK AUDIO TAPE DICTIONARY	IN BOOKBAG ALL TOGETHER	NO CHANGE ↓	USE SEPARATE ENVELOPES
Period 6 GOVERNMENT >L	TEXTBOOK 1 NOTEBOOK 2 FOLDERS	STUFF ALL IN NOTEBOOK	TEXTBOOK ↓ & 1 NOTEBK >L	USE SINGLE DIVIDED NOTEBOOK
Period 7 PHYSICAL EDUCATION >L	GYM CLOTHES	IN GYM BAG W/ PAPERS	ONLY GYM CLOTHES IN BAG >L	TAKE HOME FOR LAUNDRY

Leave Blg. 3:20

Code
Locker stops > L
Noon period > N
Direct passage ⟶

Figure 70

Plan of Materials for Student's Day

(Secondary)

For ____________________________ **Date** __________

Date to be reviewed ____________________________

Instructions: The parent records the schedule along the left side and completes the present plan on a period by period basis. If changes appear wise, the new plan may be added under the suggested heading.

Enter Bldg. ____________

	Presently (old)		Suggested (new)	
	materials carried	where/how work stored	materials carried	where/how work stored
Period 1				
Period 2				
Period 3				
Period 4				
Period 5				
Period 6				
Period 7				

Leave Blg. ____________

Code
Locker stops > L
Noon period > N
Direct passage ⟶

Before leaving this topic, a few comments are needed about using lockers, bookbags, and desks at school. All of those items can become hopelessly clogged by graded papers which have been returned to the students but never taken home, filed properly, or thrown away if unneeded. A weekly plan to clean out these areas is well worth the time to reduce the number of lost or displaced items. Often times even clothes, hobby equipment, and "friends' gear" can add to the problem. These items also need to be returned or moved back home.

Most lockers have a single top shelf where smaller items can be placed; some top compartments are high enough to stack textbooks there. This would leave the lower area with hooks for clothes and bags and the floor for shoes, boots, books, or folders, (hopefully stored upright so the titles will show). Bookbags and desks should hold only materials currently needed along with personal items such as glass cases and tissues. More room and bigger bags usually cause *more*, not fewer, problems because it increases the tendency to throw everything in without cleaning and sorting because it all fits!

A special place should be established at home where items are placed the night before they are to go back to school. If you have several students, enforce a separate area for each. Oh, the morning arguments and accusations this will save! Once under time pressure, needed materials are seldom found. Use magnets, pins, or paperclips to hold materials together if necessary or color-code envelopes, folders, or storage boxes for greater clarity.

Handing In Work Properly

Your child handed homework in but to the wrong place! Believe me, this does happen frequently and teachers own a share of the responsibility by being consistent about *where* and *how* they want work for their class turned in. I recently said to teachers at a workshop, "You have to realize most middle school and high school students have eight or nine teachers over seven periods and each of you has a different system from the others; one uses boxes, one has baskets, one is by the window while one is by the door, two of you may not have any specific plan at all. If there is a substitute teacher, students have to ask whether there is a change of plan." Most adults do not work under conditions that difficult. We may have a desk and one supervisor. How would we like to have eight or nine bosses each with a different plan? It behooves our teachers to do some thinking on this topic also.

It should help to identify the places for turning in homework in each class. In our example in Figure 71, Betsy has listed every class on her present schedule. You will note that most secondary students will have at least one "combination class"—a class that alternates with one or two other combination classes in the same time period but on different days. In these cases, require a response for each class individually because the format and content of each section often varies greatly.

Figure 71

Homework Location Questionnaire

(Secondary)

Name BETSY Date SEM. 1

Instructions: The student records the present schedule by periods and then specifies how/where homework is turned in for credit. If uncertain of answers, help the student to clarify as soon as possible.

Schedule	Where Work is to be Placed
Class Period 1	SOCIAL STUDIES – IN BASKET BY WINDOW #1 ON IT
Class Period 2	FRENCH – ON TEACHER'S DESK AT END OF PERIOD
Class Period 3	A BAND – NO PAPERWORK B HEALTH – TEACHER COLLECTS AT DOOR.
Class Period 4	ENGLISH – IN SPIRAL NOTEBOOK – COLLECTED BY TEACHER
Class Period 5	MATH – ONLY TESTS ARE GRADED – COLLECTED AT DOOR
Class Period 6	COOKING – JOURNAL LEFT AT WORK STATION EACH MONDAY
Class Period 7	STUDY HALL – NONE
Class Period 8	LIBRARY AIDE – NO WORK TO HAND IN.

Figure 72

Homework Location Questionnaire

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student records the present schedule by periods and then specifies how/where homework is turned in for credit. If uncertain of answers, help the student to clarify as soon as possible.

Schedule	Where Work is to be Placed
Class Period 1	______________________________
Class Period 2	______________________________
Class Period 3	______________________________
Class Period 4	______________________________
Class Period 5	______________________________
Class Period 6	______________________________
Class Period 7	______________________________
Class Period 8	______________________________

Loaning/Sharing Work Without Losing It

There are certain circumstances when students will work on projects together or share/loan categories of completed work (often "class notes" to other friends). There is always a risk that the homework will:

1) Not be returned at all.
2) Not be returned in time to hand in for full credit.
3) Not be returned in the same condition as it was loaned.

As a parent, the following suggestions could be made and checked on periodically if problems are occurring. See Figure 73 for an example questionnaire followed by a blank form (Figure 74) for your own use.

Figure 73

Shared Homework Questionnaire

(Secondary)

Name LINDA **Date** FALL 86

Instructions: The student responds to each question as completely as possible. The parent discusses any respones indicative of "problem situations."

1. Is there one reliable student per class who could be called upon to share ideas, work if/when needed? YES EXCEPT PERIODS 5,7,8

Names
Period 1 AMY JOHNSON
Period 2 BILL MURRAY
Period 3 JOAN ANDERSON
Period 4 TOM O REILLY
Period 5 ________
Period 6 TIM FOSTER
Period 7 ________
Period 8 ________

2. Will the system work both ways? YES
3. Is the quality fo work adequate and about equal on both sides? YES
4. Is the system used only when truly needed? YES - ONLY USED TWICE THIS SEMESTER
5. Is there a definite plan along the lines of:
   a) the work is loaned when/how YES - AFTER CLASS PERIOD BY NOTEBOOK
   b) the work is to be returned when/how YES - BEFORE SCHOOL AT LOCKER
   c) if the agareement is not working contact: NOT SURE

A word of caution: Do not be a two-time loser! If satisfactory answers aren't given, then don't allow the trading to continue.

Figure 74

Shared Homework Questionnaire

(Secondary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The student responds to each question as completely as possible. The parent discusses any respones indicative of "problem situations."

1. Is there one reliable student per class who could be called upon to share ideas, work if/when needed? ______________________________

   Names

   Period 1 ____________________
   Period 2 ____________________
   Period 3 ____________________
   Period 4 ____________________
   Period 5 ____________________
   Period 6 ____________________
   Period 7 ____________________
   Period 8 ____________________

2. Will the system work both ways? ______________________________

3. Is the quality fo work adequate and about equal on both sides? ______________________________

4. Is the system used only when truly needed? ______________________________

5. Is there a definite plan along the lines of:

   a) the work is loaned when/how ______________________________
   b) the work is to be returned when/how ______________________________
   c) if the agareement is not working contact: ______________________________

A word of caution: Do not be a two-time loser! If satisfactory answers aren't given, then don't allow the trading to continue.

Chapter 10

Specific Information from the School

Writing or Calling the School Staff
Giving and Receiving Accurate Information

School Staff:
Don't they realize how much better she could be doing?

Parents: *I tried to reach that teacher and he never called me back.*

Boy, was I furious with that comment on the report card about irresponsible student behavior. What the heck does that mean?

We visited with her music teacher, but we didn't really leave with any answers. What are we supposed to do now?

I hate to "bug" teachers, they take it out on the kids, you know.

How could we meet with all those teachers, she has nine teachers?

Our daughter says not to call the school. She is either too embarrassed or she has been lying.

Writing or Calling the School Staff

For each of the major issues covered in other sections of this book, you may need information beyond what your student is able to accurately deliver. Hopefully you have noted many methods of collecting, monitoring, and charting specific information. In many cases, students do not have a total perspective of the classroom situation. If you suspect this may be the case or realize you may be getting led down the garden path to deception, then it is time to directly approach the school staff.

Most teachers welcome a concerned parent's interest and will cooperate with a willing parent's efforts. Indeed, they will consider themselves fortunate to have a team effort available, because this is usually what is needed for consistent improvement.

If a letter or telephone call format seems to be a good choice, you will find a sample letter/guideline for a conversation following. It is proposed as a generalized opening paragraph followed by an individualized second or third paragraph, and then a closing. The letter could be hand carried to the teacher(s) if your student is willing and reliable or it could be mailed to the school office.

Date the note that you are sending. Teachers are not always at the school; they may be at a workshop or sick that day. It is important for them to know on what day you sent the message. Put the teacher's full name on the note because at larger schools, there may be more than one teacher with the same last name. Put your first and last name on the note, do not put "Sandy's mother, social studies." Some teachers have three or four Sandy's and they teach social studies all day long! Usually they can guess the source, but it makes it much more difficult to wonder, "Is this Sandy Johnson's mother? It probably is because she did not do well on the last test." Let us not leave it up to chance.

State what subject and what grade your child is in. Your student has busy teachers. There is not much time during the day to make phone calls and to write notes. Be specific about what you need to know. Let them know when you can be reached. I cannot tell you the time this will save them and it should result in faster responses. If they read a note that says, "Please call me tonight, I will home until 9 o'clock," or "Please get to me by six if possible because I will be out of town tomorrow," that helps enormously. You need to stop and put yourself in the other person's shoes. If you were the teacher with one planning period and had four phone calls to make and three people to see, you probably would call the parent who wrote, "I only need two minutes, it is just one question; I have work breaks between here and here."

The following is a sample letter outline.

Basic Opening Paragraph

Dear ______________ (teacher's first and last name)

I need to speak with you soon concerning my child ______________ (student's first and last name), who is in your ______________ (subject area) class during ______________ (period/time). You may call me at ______________ (phone number) between the hours of ______ (be specific) on ______________ (what days) or contact me at my home address ______________ (specific address) and ______________ (home number).

I can meet with you at school on ______________ (what days) from/at ______________ (specific hours) if this is possible for you.

Please contact me by ______________ (deadline day, hour) if possible.

Individualized Paragraph(s) (see choices below)

We/I have discussed ________________ (the problem) with ________________ (student's name) and believe the specific questions may be:

(use items from lists on the next pages or add your own)

Closing

Sincerely, ________________ (parent's full name)

See a completed letter using some specific fill-in questions for the categories listed later in this chapter.

Possible Motivation Questions

Does ________ (name) seem to be paying attention in class?

Has ________ (name) volunteered answers occasionally in class?

Does ________ (name) seem prepared for your class? ________ (He/She) reports to ____ (us/me) that the work is always completed and turned in with little or no homework. Could you let ____ (us/me) know if that is factual.

Possible Work Quality Questions

In what form should the work from this ________ (subject area) book be handed in? What are minimum standards for the ________ (subject area) worksheets?

Could you tell me approximately how much time most students take to complete the ________ (specific numbers) lessons after instructions have been given?

Would there be a sample of ________ (materials) we could see in order to better understand what an acceptable paper would be? Do you notice ________ (name) taking notes during your class and if you have scanned them, do they appear adequate?

Does ________ (name) seem confused about using reference materials such as ________ (be specific).

When you are teaching does ________ (name) seem to be listening most of the time? If not, what exactly is ________ (name) doing? Could you tell me when and how instructions are usually given?

Possible Incomplete Work Issues

When and how should ________________ (name) arrange for a few minutes of one-to-one help?

Have you observed that ________ (name) does not have the needed materials? ________________
If so what? ________________________________

Is there time allowed in class to redo or finish up work? ________________

Possible Missing Work Issues

Can you specifically tell us where homework is to be placed in the ____________ (subject area) class and if there are exceptions to this rule, what they might be? ____________________________________

____

When should homework be turned in? ______________________________

Is late work given less credit or no credit at all? __________________________

If worksheets are lost, are there extra copies available to complete for at least partial credit? ________

How long does my child ____________ (name) have to make up the work in your ____________ (subject area) class following his absence due to ______________________ (reason) ?

Is there time allowed in class to do some of the homework? Have you noticed whether ____________ (name) uses this time well?

Have you noticed organizational/storage problems with ____________ (name)'s work?

Are there certain types of work which seem to be most problematic? If so, could you provide some details from your observations please? ______________________________

____

How are deadlines for homework given in your ______________________ (subject area) class and how are directions given? ______________________________

If directions are missed entirely, what should ________ (name) do to obtain the information? Can ________ (he/she) come in ____________ (before/after) school for a one-on-one session?

Possible Test Issues

1. Is there a specific plan for reviewing for tests in your ____________ (subject area) class?
2. Have you observed any especially poor test taking behaviors from ________ (name) and if so could you provide details from your observations?
3. Could ____________ (name) be allowed to bring home his next test after grading so that we may review his errors and learn from them?
4. Is there extra credit allowed to replace a poor test grade under any circumstances?
   ____
5. If ____________ (name) needed to miss a test could ________ (he/she) be allowed to take it a day ____________ (before/after). What will be the most fair and convenient way for us to handle this?

Here is a sample letter using the fill in approach:

October 10, 1986

Dear John Armstrong,

I need to speak with you soon concerning my child, Teresa Miller, who is in your American History class during period 2. You may call me at 786-3197 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. on any weekday or contact me at my home address of 911 Maple Street or call me there at 786-9321 after 6:00 p.m. most evenings.

I can meet with you at school on Wednesday mornings from 8-12 with a bit of advanced notice if you would have a few minutes available. Please contact me by Tuesday evening, if possible.

I have discussed the missing worksheets with Teresa and believe the specific questions may be 1) If directions are missed in your class, what should Teresa do to get the information? Can she come in either before school at 7:45-8:00 or after school from 3:15-3:30 for some help? 2) Is late work given any credit? Teresa says she will do all of the missing pages you mentioned on the note but several are apparently lost. Can these be replaced?

Sincerely,

Joan Miller

Giving and Receiving Accurate Information

If a short checklist appears to be needed following a conference by telephone or in person, you will find examples following which use simple statements. Note in both cases there are home and school responsibilities in equal measure and information must flow back and forth. In the first example, Jeff was rewarded with colored paper "tickets" at the rate of one per yes each day across both settings for a maximum of eight. (See Figure 75.)

Figure 75

School and Home Update

(Upper Elementary)

Name JEFF KING **Date** APRIL 11

Instructions: The teacher and parents put an "X" in the "yes" column if a behavior is shown or an "X" in the "no" column if the behavior is not shown. This form is carried between home and school each day.

		Yes	No
School Responsibilities	1. Finished work on time.	X	
	2. Did work carefully, proofread		X
	3. Requested help if needed.	X	
	4. Used words acceptably.		X

Henry Scott
(teacher's signature)

Jeff
(student's signature)

		Yes	No
Home Responsibilities	1. Completed homework if needed.	X	
	2. Accepted/received help if needed.	X	
	3. Carried daily progress sheet to school and home.	X	
	4. Used words acceptably.	X	

Comments:
COULD YOU HELP JEFF UNDERSTAND PROOF-READING TOMORROW?
HE SAYS HE THOUGHT HE WAS PROOF-READING. THANKS

Nathan King
(parent's signature)

Jeff
(student's signature)

Figure 76

School and Home Update

(Upper Elementary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: The teacher and parents put an "X" in the "yes" column if a behavior is shown or an "X" in the "no" column if the behavior is not shown. This form is carried between home and school each day.

		Yes	No
School	1. Finished work on time.	___	___
Responsibilities	2. Did work carefully, proofread	___	___
	3. Requested help if needed.	___	___
	4. Used words acceptably.	___	___

______________________________ (teacher's signature)

______________________________ (student's signature)

		Yes	No
Home	1. Completed homework if needed.	___	___
Responsibilities	2. Accepted/received help if needed.	___	___
	3. Carried daily progress sheet to school and home.	___	___
	4. Used words acceptably.	___	___

Comments:

____

____

______________________________ (parent's signature)

______________________________ (student's signature)

Figure 77

Update Credits for Week

(Upper Elementary)

Name ______________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: One ticket is awarded for each "yes" on the school and home update sheet up to a total of eight per day.

Weekly Credit Earned

	School Responsibilities	Home Responsibilities
Monday	______ tickets	______ tickets
Tuesday	______ tickets	______ tickets
Wednesday	______ tickets	______ tickets
Thursday	______ tickets	______ tickets
Friday	______ tickets	______ tickets

Collect tickets once each week.

______________________________ Name

______________________________ Dates covered

Figure 78

To/From Home Responsibility Sheet

(Elementary)

Name KATHY STANLEY **Date** FEB 3

Instructions: An aide and the parents place an "X" under "yes" if the behavior is shown and they place an "X" under "no" if the behavior is not shown. This form is carried between home and school each day.

		Yes	No	
School Responsibility	completed work with help of teacher aide	X		MR aide's initials
	attended on time and cooperated with a good attitude	X		MR aide's initials
		Yes	No	
Home Responsibility	Completed reading of assignment	X		K.S. parent's initials
	-please return to teacher-			

In Katy's example (Figure 78), she was working for a twenty-minute period each day with a teacher's aide and wasn't fully cooperating, therefore this specific area was made a target for a checklist. Both the parent and the aide could compliment Katy for cooperation in not only one setting, but in the other also when such feedback was made a part of the plan. Each sheet shows conservative use of paper, with more than one day's communication per page. Simply copy or carbon and cut apart for attaching to work with paperclip or rubber band.

Figure 79

To/From Home Responsibility Sheet

(Elementary)

Name ________________________________ **Date** __________

Instructions: An aide and the parents place an "X" under "yes" if the behavior is shown and they place an "X" under "no" if the behavior is not shown. This form is carried between home and school each day.

		Yes	No	
School Responsibility	completed work with help of teacher aide	_____	_____	aide's initials
	attended on time and cooperated with a good attitude	_____	_____	aide's initials
		Yes	No	
Home Responsibility	Completed reading of assignment	_____	_____	parent's initials
	-please return to teacher-			

Name ________________________________ **Date** __________

		Yes	No	
School Responsibility	completed work with help of teacher aide	_____	_____	aide's initials
	attended on time and cooperated with a good attitude	_____	_____	aide's initials
		Yes	No	
Home Responsibility	Completed reading of assignment	_____	_____	parent's initials
	-please return to teacher-			

Closing

To summarize, here is a brief review of the concepts presented in this book. All of us need to be motivated. If motivation could come without any outside help, students might like themselves better, have fewer hassles, and earn better grades. The reality is, *many* students of *all* ages need a lot of help. If your children need some help, what can you do to reward yourselves and your children for trying? What are you willing to do in order to help them to eliminate their bad habits?

Think about what the choices are for your student and for you. Which ones might work for your student? You do not necessarily have to write the contract out, but I am suggesting you will more likely carry it out if you write it. You are more likely to check it if you write it. I will tell you most definitely that you will be more fair if you write it. Remember, you may need to share information with the school staff before beginning a plan and a written approach helps to build understanding.

Personalize these ideas. Change them. There is nothing meaningful about any of these procedures if they are not working for you. Do not do something because someone else is doing it with their child and telling you how wonderful it is. Stop and ask questions. If you are a student working on self improvement with these ideas, share your ideas with your teachers. They will be impressed with your interest and your efforts. Do not cross-hatch contracts. Do not dilute your study contract by adding non-study items. It will weaken the primary effort here.

Frankly, another thing we do a lot to our children is let them down. For example, we forget to "pay off." Believe me, actions speak louder than words. If we have a contract, we would be wise to own up and say, "Yes you did and, no I did not. I am going to have to work harder for both of us together."

Consider putting a plan together and giving it a try. Refer back to the specific chapters if details are needed at this point. Evaluate the results. Do both parties think it was reasonable? Maybe you thought you were going to dramatically improve all aspects in just one week, and you probably won't. In many instances, it has taken years to get these habits and you are seldom going to completely change them in one week, unless they are very minor.

Did everybody know what they were supposed to do? You may learn that "to get it right," you have to write more things down. Perhaps your child did not like what was chosen for a payoff. Then again, maybe you do not like the time you said you were going to get back together because it was not clear. You will then need to change that aspect.

What did you like about it? Why was it good? Keep that! Eliminate what was unworkable. This is life. That does not mean it is anyone's fault!

Finally, are there new questions you have to take back to the school in order to seek answers? Now you are talking to your child and at least you *know* you have a new problem! You know you have a new question and you are going to get back on the phone or write another note.

The ultimate goal is to slowly be able to "fade out" and let the students stand on their own. Fading means to gradually decrease the amount of time, attention, and outside rewarding devoted to a project and allowing self direction and intrinsic motivation to gradually fill the need to the fullest extent possible. It is not always possible to completely withdraw, but steps along those lines are appropriate once a study skill issue seems largely resolved.

If a return of the problem occurs, simply step back in and expect a quicker resolution the second time. Your *mutual* hard work should have provided a solid foundation of basic skills to be called upon. Indeed, reminders and reviews are sometimes needed periodically.

So... your student is assuming more responsibility. You are noticing and supporting. Please, take time to appreciate what you both have done. Your efforts may well have given the precious gift of confidence and uplifted self esteem—the "I can do it, after all" self message we hope for in our children... and in ourselves.

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Homework Helpers:
A Guide for Parents Offering Assistance

by Joan Eklund Kuepper

Parents know their students far better than any teacher, counselor, or psychologist ever will. As a parent of teenagers, a former teacher, a youth leader, and a school psychologist of ten years, Joan Kuepper offers some possibilities to help parents of children from first grade through college help their children learn. *Homework Helpers* dwells on planning because, if there is a problem, it pays to make a plan. Sample materials are included, complete with grade-level codes. Blank forms which follow the examples are for parents to copy and use should they appear "workable" in a specific situation. Teachers, counselors, administrators, or psychologists also may use this book to make recommendations to parents who desire to help their children to study more effectively.

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ISBN 0-932796-22-

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